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VERSES AND SONNETS
BY
JULIA STOCKTON
DINSMORE

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SONNETS

BY
JULIA STOCKTON
DINSMORE
" (F. V.)

NEW YORK
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TO
S. F. C.
THE SHEAF IS BOUND—
WHEAT OR TARES
ALL THINE



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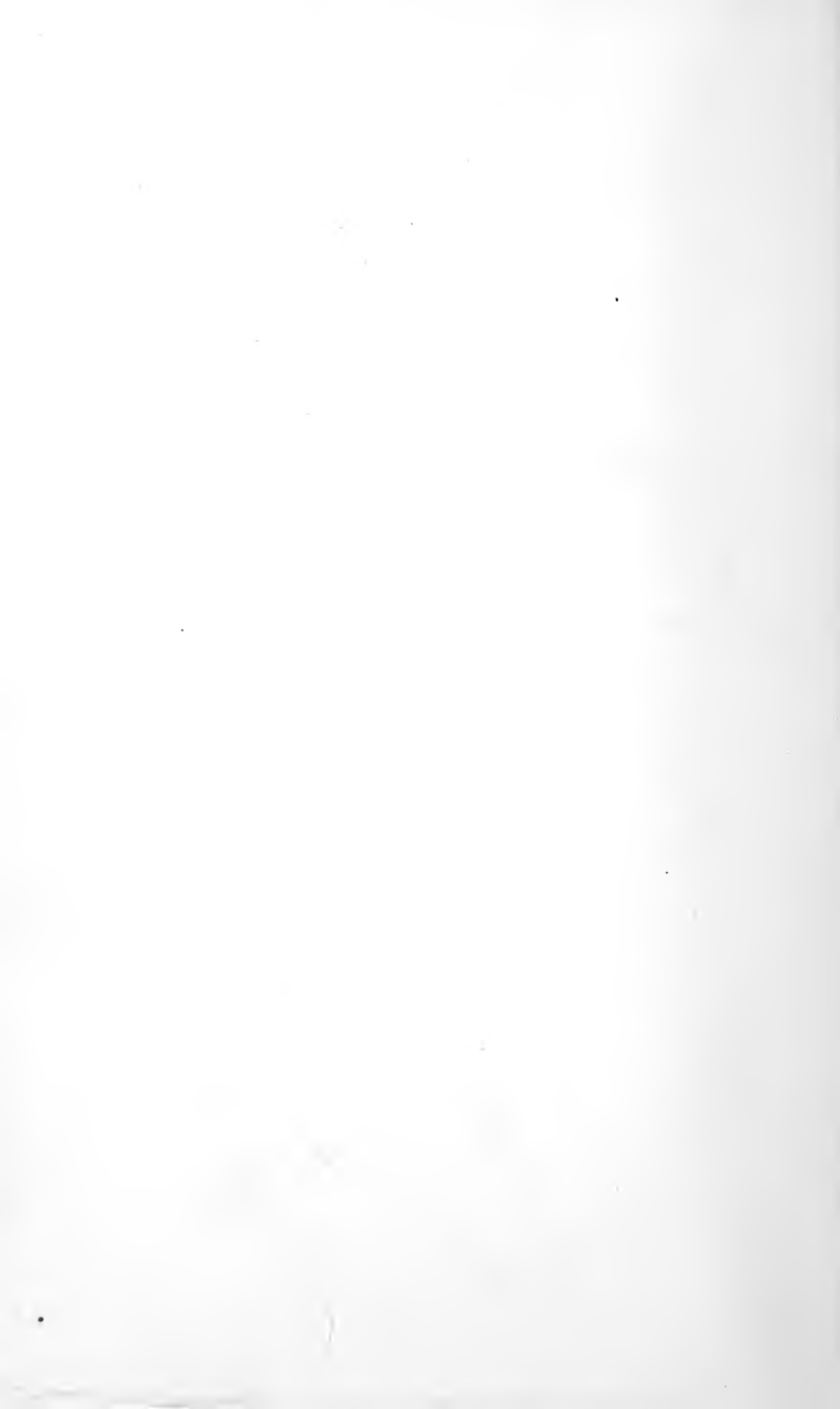
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VERSES AND SONNETS
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DINSMORE

MY THRENODY

BIRDS, I must leave you all;
As you fly in the fall,
So when days shorten and the sunshine wanes,
I, too, must hie
To lands that lie
Past the strait gate where ceaseless silence reigns.
So, birds, I bid you all
Come to my funeral,
And sing some sweet impromptu threnody;
But if you feel too shy,
Come singly, by and by,
And to the stillness chant your elegy.

Bluebird, I pray you hear,—
Come when you first appear;
Let your fine tracks be seen
In the light snows that screen
The hopeful grass already turning green;
In true love's color dight,
Warble that spring is come;
Even my darksome home
Would at the sweet familiar sound grow bright.

MY THRENODY

O robin, if you miss my welcome, haste!
Fly to my narrow mound,
Bringing one sere, dead leaf
In token of your grief,
And lay it where my heart lies underground.
Then tell me all: how china-berries taste,
How orange flowers and magnolias smell
In that far region that we love so well;
What fun you had in swamp and wild canebrake,
'Mong bayous, black as Styx, that gently glide
'Mid cypresses moss-muffled on each side,
Toward the blue gulf's resistless, restless tide;
And then forego
A worm or so,
To sing one little song for old time's sake.

O redbird, fold your wings
Weary with wanderings,
And on these hospitable branches rest.
Like a pomegranate flower
In the dark foliage of the cedar tree,
Shine out and sing for me,
Sing by the hour,—the hour!
That bush would hide your nest,
That so your fiery breast
Might warm again with love's wild melody
The heart by earth and silence so oppressed.

Fieldlark, with yellow breast,
Sometimes I loved you best;
When slowly riding by,
On a fence stake, back-tilted,
Fearless of me you lilted

MY THRENODY

To the blue boundless sky.
Come, turn your primrose throat,
And with your sweetest note .
Sing me good-by.

The graveyard lies so near
The woods, that I might hear,
Save for that silence drear,
The sad, self-centred whip-poor-will's refrain,
And by his dirge might know,
Though idle down below,
The glad corn-planting time had come again.
The turtle dove upon the broad copestone
Shall linger long enough to make his moan,
Then fly for comfort to his faithful mate;
And birds too small to name,
But friendly all the same,
Shall chirp upon the spearheads of the gate;
And visitants more rare
Come flashing through the air,
To sing their farewells where I lie and wait;
And for a last good night,
In some serene twilight
To love and memory dear,
The brown thrush, hidden in the deepest shade,
Shall in his sweetheart's ear
Pour his pathetic, passionate serenade.

O, buzzards, sailing by,
To light, aloof and high,
On the tall tulip trees so close and grand,
I leave a word for you;
For in your element I like you, too,—

MY THRENODY

Have loved to stand
Below the blue, with eager eyes up-bent,
To see you circle in your eerie play,
Your weird, winged sun-dance in the firmament.
Oft, when you fly this way,
Let your swift shadows pass
Across the parching grass
That wraps me, on some sultry summer day.

And, oh, my dear bob-white,—
Loved to your quaint topknot,—
If by next year
One asks, "Is she forgot?"
Say, loud and clear,
So even I might hear,
Save for that silence drear,
"Not quite! Not quite!"

DAY-DREAMS

DOWN the dark bayou glides our boat,
A water-lily bud afloat
The white-robed lady seems;
Slowly she turns from shore to shore
Eyes that will haunt me evermore,
Brown eyes brimful of dreams.

Dream-like the scene that meets their gaze
The drooping gray moss swings and sways
Rippling the water clear;
The fishes flash from wavy rings,
The water-bird with startled wings
Flits from us as we near.

The cypress sentinels around
Guard us in secrecy profound
And, arching to the skies,
Let in the pure air straight from heaven
Unbreathed of earth, by flowers even,
Pure as my lady's eyes.

DAY-DREAMS

By reed and flag our light boat drifts;
The serried cane its lances lifts,
 The prairie grass its plumes;
This sweet swamp lily—like my love,
Earth-rooted—white as clouds above,
 For us alone it blooms.

Beside us lean the fragrant bays,
And bending buds on slender sprays
 Blush at their mirrored charms;
Beyond, dead trees, a spectral crowd,
With clinging moss for tattered shroud,
 Stretch out their ghostly arms.

Here the red lily's wasting flame
Lights a dim nook to which we came,
 Her short life's one surprise;
Here ours lavishly are strewn
In flowers undreamed of, and unknown
 By scent, or leaf, or dyes.

A restless bird up there above,
Heart-full of music, hope, and love,
 Seeks where to hide its nest;
Here's the pale beauty of the brier,
Here wilder vines, that climbing higher,
 Elate with blossoms rest.

Beyond this twined and tangled bower,
Like forest chieftains, live-oaks tower
 And storm-worn pennons wave;
There troops the wild palmetto clan,
Bristling and rustling, rear and van,
 Here ferns their frail fronds lave.

DAY-DREAMS

Silent as in a dream we glide,
My lady's eyes are open wide,
 Dark as the stream below;
Her sweet red lips' unbroken seal,
On thoughts too sacred to reveal,
 Too deep for me to know.

She sees the yellow buds that gleam
Like balls of gold within the stream,
 She dips her warm, white hand;
The unblown lilies round it press,
Whose gathering touch, as a caress
 Foredoomed, they understand.

The shore and sky, the sky and shore,
Tenderly mingling evermore
 In this mysterious stream,
Perplex the soul by passion riven—
Oh, is it earth or is it heaven?
 Reality or dream?

A sudden sound, and toward me turned,
Silent as one in dreams concerned,
 Her eyes her question make;
And I, aroused from dreaming too,
Reluctantly their bidding do,
 The charm of silence break.

"That splash?—in that from Eden's bower
The serpent, having lost his power,
 Into oblivion sinks;
While from that tree of knowledge bare,
The bird of wisdom dozing there
 Above us, nods and winks."

DAY-DREAMS

“For one brief blessed hour to-day
We’ve slipped our hoods and soared away,
 From off the prim world’s wrist;
But she will beckon us again,
And to her narrow flight restrain
 Wings that dare not resist.”

“Not wasted was your dreaming hour,
For you a convert, by Love’s power,
 Have made ’twixt shore and shore,
And though I die unwept, unshriven,
I will believe henceforth in heaven
 And angels, evermore.”

She answers not, but as we land,
An instant lays in mine the hand
 Whose lightest touch endears,
And, gathering all the sweetness past
Into one glance, lifts up, at last,
 Brown eyes brimful of tears.

THE DANDELION

THE brave old hillside wears its scar
Plainly and proudly yet.
Not on the rampart raised by war
Has Peace her ploughshare set,
But sun and shower, frost and snow
Softens, as best they can,
The grim memorial long ago
Red with the wrath of man.

Where once no hostile foot might pass
Beyond its guarded brow,
The neutral armies of the grass
Swarm o'er the earthwork now;
Here, where the smoke of battle rose
And carnage raged around,
The lavish dandelion strows
Gold pieces on the ground.

Reckless alike of charge or rout,
The mad mêlée of foes,
On the appeased and still redoubt
Its disk of sunshine glows;

THE DANDELION

While men of blood and glorious deeds,
Victors and vanquished—all—
Have vanished like the flying seeds
Blown from its ripened ball.

AN AIR-SHIP BARCAROLLE

LOVE, if our trusted ship should fail
Our dearest, direst need,
Should neither skill nor will avail
To choose its course or speed,
Never, oh! never a downward flight,
With thee in the tangled wreck!
But, soaring ever from height to height,
A wayward, wandering speck,
By four ill-winds to the zenith blown,
Our helmless bark shall fare
O'er currents chartless and unknown,
A derelict of the air,—
To space where hostile forces meet,
Preventing fall or rise,
And sail like the crescent fair and fleet
Round boundless, soundless skies,
Till all that's mortal, material,
'Mid the ceaseless whirl of gales,
Into the depths ethereal
Dissolves, resolves, exhales;
And of our frail ship and of heart and lip
Remain to the blue above,
Only the sigh of lovers that die,—
Only our deathless love.

MEMENTO MORI

NO need of cloister walls and cowls and cross,
Of silent brotherhood with strange doled speech,
And sad eyes eloquent of grief and loss,
The lesson of these solemn words to teach.

Ambiguous words, like oracles of old,
Dark as the grave, mysterious as fate,
That to the right interpreter unfold
A meaning love and hope illuminate.

When Eve and Adam exiled, turned to see
The flaming sword against the lowering sky,
The strange cursed ground, they knew that this must be
Their lightest sentence, "Thou shalt surely die."

We know it, too, but we forget it, too:
The cursed ground seems so green and warm and glad
To youth's bright eyes, the peaceful sky so blue,
Those fatal words so cruel and so sad.

MEMENTO MORI

We love our earth for our beloved's sake.

Leave it and them? ah, no! but earth is kind;
And lest our sudden doom our hearts might break
She ceases not to warn us and remind.

"Memento mori," sighs the summer breeze;

Incredulous roses shake their heads and fall,
And autumn shows us blazoned on the trees
A presage of the destiny of all.

"Memento mori," every bird that flies

Breathes this as burden of its blithest song.
All things that dwell below the circling skies
Live but to prove that nothing lives here long.

All, all are Death's, and he will have his own,

And when his own are ours, our claim imparts
To those dread words a tender undertone;
Their double meaning flashes on our hearts.

Hope's motto, or the legend of despair—

We take our choice. Beloved, mine is made;
No soul that lives and breathes this vital air
Is dear or near to me as thy dear shade.

Memento mori? could I then forget—

When all my hopes have dwindled into one?
Dwindled? centred, as in lens are met
In one bright spark the errant rays of sun.

MEMENTO MORI

Graved on my heart, a sacred talisman,
The awful words its secret joy shall be,
What though it grieve as only true hearts can?
I, too, shall die, shall live again with thee.

SAPPHO

GIVE me the lyre—
This heart, pent up so long,
That finds no easing outlet save in song,
Trembles like wind-blown fire.
As my hands smite these strings,
So do they beat against the bars of fate
That cage me here without a living mate,
Loneliest of lonely things!
The gods I do accuse:
I have conjured them oft with sob and tear;
But they in far Elysium would not hear,—
They may not now refuse.
How could they for their play,
Tired of amorous plots and ventures wild,
Form out of fragile clay
A poor, weak, perishable woman-child,
And in her beautiful, defenseless breast
Implant a poet's heart,
Cursed beyond all the rest,
An alien born, to live a thing apart?

SAPPHO

My soul within me burns,
As in a lamp a wick that lacks the oil,
A useless flame—ashes in funeral urns
No sadder are than this sad life of mine.
Love's grief, love's madness, even its cares and toil,
Were for a fitting object only joy.
Love comes to me, a foolish, brief-winged boy,
Blindfold and fumbling with his bow and dart,
When I have dreamed of it as cloud or fire,
Infolding or consuming but divine,
Wherein, like Io or rash Semele,
Inwrought, etherealized my life might be.

Sound louder still, my lyre!—
I will once more those cruel gods invoke,
Who bowed a poet's neck beneath the yoke
Of galling womanhood's infirmity.
Would I not gladly be
Andromeda in fetters by the sea,
A sacrifice, surrendered to despair,
If at the moment of supremest need,
Like apparitions in the upper air,
I saw my hero on his wingéd steed?
Would I not gladly be
Forsaken Ariadne on her isle,
Watching the sail of Theseus further flee,
Homesick and lovesick—mad with treachery,—
To have a god console me with his smile?
Ay! what to me, with Bacchus on his pard,
Were loss of home and faith and lover, too?
This love would seem so wonderful, so new,
And ways that led to him no longer hard.

SAPPHO

I was not made for earth,
The vestal flame flickers too faint and chill;
And by no household hearth
Shall I partake of natural human mirth,
An exile still—
Seeking a loftier sphere, a nobler race,
Finding among my own no slightest trace
Of kindred warmth or cordial comradeship.
They love, 'tis true, but love with eye and lip,
And in their hearts' strait chalice what I pour
O'erflows and falls and wastes on arid ground.

How I could love, if gods but walked this shore,
And I might meet one wandering, face to face!
But when I speak of it with awe profound,
They mock me with "Too late" and "Nevermore."
Too late—alas! what do vain words avail?
"The gods themselves cannot their gifts recall."
Wail, ineffectual lyre, a last, long wail:
There is no place for me—earth is too small—
But toward the immeasurable regions of the dead,
One open, trackless way remains to tread
That leaves no trace behind: the boundless deep
Shall roll its shelter o'er my homeless head.
There shall my lyre with me in silence sleep—
Our fire quenched in death's tranquillity.
I, who have borne the earth, why should I dread
The awful, the immitigable sea?

THE EMPEROR'S REVIEW

THE sunshine gleams upon the vast array,
Glitters and glistens all the arméd throng,
A splendid spectacle this royal day
Awaits the Emperor, nor waits him long.

And this is Peace—the eagle of his might,
Resting from rapine on her lofty peak,
Plumes her black feathers for a farther flight,
Whets her keen talons and her bloody beak.

Life seems a triumph to our dazzled eyes,
Its voice a pæan—though from homes remote
Toil-hardened women's overburthened sighs
Seem with the martial notes to melt and float.

Here at his feet the realm its tribute pours,
Of golden youth, and hope, and strength, and skill,
But adding nothing to the nation's stores
They only guard the land their mothers till.

THE EMPEROR'S REVIEW

All these are his, his weapons for the foe,
And deadlier arms no rival sovereign boasts;
With kindling eyes and withered cheeks aglow
He sees himself an earthly lord of hosts.

Heart of this living tide that ebbs and flows—
With clang of trumpets and with roll of drums,
Defying Time and Death, his direst foes—
Along the line the grand old Kaiser comes.

As grand a heathen as the Paynim lord
Who snatched the Sepulchre from faithful Franks,
Though offering duly as he sheathes his sword
The God of battles his Imperial thanks.

The God of battles—can the Kaiser mean
The man of sorrows, smitten, crowned with thorn,
Fronting his enemies with eyes serene,
Bending bare shoulders to the scourger's scorn?

Call on thy ancient gods, thou man of war,
With life's libation its grim powers invoke;
The wrathful Odin, and the Thunderer Thor,
Not him who on the mount his message spoke.

As blesséd peacemaker, art thou God's son?
Inheriting the earth—as blesséd, meek?
Couldst thou, fresh-crowned with laurels fairly won,
Turn to an enemy that stern, bronzed cheek?

THE EMPEROR'S REVIEW

Again like trump of doom the martial blast
Pours the wild music of its stirring strain;
Evoked like shades from out the buried past,
Primeval passions rise and live again.

The angels' song that charmed the shepherds' ears,
Long faintly echoing, seems at last to cease,
And love's few votaries recall with tears
The fruitless Passion of the Prince of Peace.

LOVE AMONG THE ROSES

“WHAT, dear—what dear?”

How sweet and clear

The redbird's eager voice I hear;

Perched on the honeysuckle trellis near

He sits elate,

Red as the cardinal whose name he bears,

And tossing high the gay cockade he wears

Calls to his mate,

“What, dear—what, dear?”

She stirs upon her nest,

And through her ruddy breast

The tremor of her happy thoughts repressed

Seems rising like a sigh of bliss untold,

There where the searching sunbeams' stealthy gold

Slips past the thorns and her retreat discloses,

Hid in the shadow of June's sweetest roses.

Her russet, rustic home,

Round as inverted dome

Built by themselves and planned,

Within whose tiny scope,

As though to them the hollow of God's hand,

They gladly trust their all with faith and hope.

LOVE AMONG THE ROSES

"What, dear—what dear?"
Are all the words I hear,
The rest is said, or sung
In some sweet, unknown tongue
Whose music, only, charms my alien ear;
But bird, my heart can guess
All that its tones express
Of love and cheer, and fear and tenderness.

It says, "Does the day seem long—
The scented and sunny day
Because you must sit apart?
Are you lonesome, my own sweetheart?
You know you can hear my song
And you know I'm alert and strong
And a match for the wickedest jay
That ever could do us wrong.
As I sit on the snowball spray
Or this trellis not far away,
And look at you on the nest,
And think of those beautiful speckled shells
In whose orbs the birds of the future rest,
My heart with such pride and pleasure swells
As never could be expressed.

"But, dear—but, dear!"—
Now I seem to hear
A change in the notes so proud and clear—
"But, dear—but, dear!
Do you feel no fear
When day is gone and the night is here?

LOVE AMONG THE ROSES

When the cold, white moon looks down on you,
And your feathers are damp with the chilly dew,
And I am silent, and all is still,
Save the sleepless insects, sad and shrill,
And the screeching owl, and the prowling cat,
And the howling dog—when the gruesome bat
Flits past the nest in his circling flight
Do you feel afraid in the lonely night?"

"Courage! my own, when daylight dawns
You shall hear again in the cheerful morns
My madrigal among the thorns,
Whose rugged guardianship incloses
Our link of love among the roses."

✓

NOON IN A BLUE GRASS PASTURE

THE god of day his azure shield outspreads
And lets his dazzling arrows earthward fly,
The giant trees undaunted lift their heads,
Crouched at their feet the trembling shadows lie.

The wind is mute that softly stirs the air,
The birds are still upon the leafy limbs,
Save one that in the ether, cool and rare,
On billows blue, with sweeping pinions swims.

Gladly I lay my tired limbs on the grass,
For I of toil and stress have borne my part,
Have seen my joys like morning mist-clouds pass;
The green earth warms me like a mother's heart.

Here let me rest, sweet mother, evermore;
Change me to grass like this, or fragile fern,
Or precious meed of toil from thy rich store;
Dust of thy dust, to thee I would return.

NOON IN A BLUE GRASS PASTURE

The dew of youth is gone. I would not stay
For the lone coolness of the twilight hour.
Like morning-glory let me fold away
In noontide weariness, life's faded flower.

THE CLOCK'S REPLY

A LITTLE girl sat in the door of a hall,
And heard the quaint clock crooning there
The monotonous message Time sends to all,
And said with a willful, petulant air,
“Hurry, old clock, you are so slow,
I’m tired of hearing you tick and tick;
You are always starting and back you go,
I want you to change and whirl round quick.
I’m tired and sick of being small,
And having to mind and study too;
I want to be free and wise and tall—
Tall and minded, old clock, like you.
My nest is empty, my birds have flown,—
I saw it just now tho’ the grass was wet;
Hurry, old clock, I want to be grown.”
But the clock ticked on, “Not yet, not yet.”

A young girl stood in the same hall door,
Watching her lover go down the way
He had gone so often, but nevermore
Would come again; then, smiling gay,

THE CLOCK'S REPLY

She turned to the old clock muttering there,
And said with the slightest, subtlest trace
Of her once imperious childish air,
Mixed with her maidenly charm and grace,
"Hurry, old clock, you are so slow;
Though both of us thought you far too fast,
As we often have, a moment ago.
Oh, if meetings would only last!
Already I long his face to see;
Let the swift moons rise and the swift suns set,
And bring back my darling quick to me."
But the clock ticked on, "Not yet, not yet."

A sad-faced woman leant in her chair,
In the self-same door at the close of day,
And still in its wonted corner there
Grimly the old clock ticked away.
The woman turned from the fading skies
To the only voice in the lonely hall,
And said, with reproach in her weary eyes,
"The same old song since I was small!
Hurry, old clock—you are so slow,
And my heart impatient beats so fast.
The time is tedious: I long to go,
Oh, if partings were only past,
And we might meet in that dreamland blest
Where all my troubles I might forget,
Clasped once more to my darling's breast!"
But the clock ticked on, "Not yet, not yet."

A DREAM OF HARMONY

T IRED and sad I sought my ease
In my hammock under the old oak trees,
For the gold was dim in the fading west
And the glad, wild birds had flown to rest;
But my sad, wild thoughts flew far and free,
And there seemed no twilight rest for me,
For my soul was stirred, and my heart at war
In petty revolt against life's law.
How tired I am of it all, thought I,
Of the daily duties circling by
Like the sails of a windmill driving me,—
Oh! to be like the wild birds, free,
Like the shifting winds that at their will
Wreck argosies or drive a mill.
I march with my comrades all abreast,
Longing for freedom to run or rest:
My feet keep step, my weary feet,
But they miss the music's cheering beat;
Oh! to break ranks with one wild dart
For liberty of life and heart;
Oh! to be free for one brief hour
From fealty to an unseen power.

A DREAM OF HARMONY

Then, as I mused, the evening breeze,
Murmuring low in the leafy trees,
Cooling, lulling, lifting my hair,
Lapped me in slumber unaware.
But wide awake I seemed to be,
Swung in a sphere of ecstasy;
All heavenly bodies I seemed to see
Linked, as by love, both bond and free,
Circling aloft in a mystic round,
Moving to one harmonious sound,
While from dimmest space beyond my view
Aeolian strains of music blew.
But a sudden awful discord rent
The heart of the vibrant firmament,
And the linked stars burst loose o'erhead,
And dropped like pearls from a broken thread.
The weltering earth fell fast and far
With the downward rush of a shooting-star,
While ever above in the trembling air
The bacchanal stars ran riot there,
Glanced and glimmered, shot and wheeled
Like fireflies over a clover field;
Or nearer, like ships afire, they flew
On the foam-light waves of that ocean blue,
Before the wind, from their moorings wrenched;
And some went down—their fire quenched.

All my life long my world had swung
Like a hanging nest, the stars among,
And its measured motions to and fro
Were felt no more than the ebb and flow

A DREAM OF HARMONY

Of my own sound heart, that now stood still
With a nameless dread and a deathly chill,
Now leapt like the heart of a captured bird,
As the whiz of the flying worlds I heard,
While the mad winds raved and homeless roamed
And the moonless waters swirled and foamed.
To the stout oak trees my hammock swung
Like a spider web, and for life I clung—
Clung to the ropes as the sailor clings
When the mast o'er the boiling ocean swings.
My heart grew faint and my hands grew weak
As stars shot past, streak after streak;
On, on we sped with a downward sweep
Like the fall that wakes us from our sleep—
On a vaster world mine crashed and broke—
The lights went out—like the dead I woke.

Woke in a life so calm and sweet,
Stars overhead, earth under feet,
The patient day-trod grass upspringing,
The short-lived insects gaily singing,
The hammock fast to the solid trees,
And I still in it, taking my ease.
O blissful wakening! Blest reprieve!
No more at love's sweet law I grieve;
This lesson the flaming skies unrolled,—
The arms that shelter, fold and hold.
Freedom is good, but order best;
I march to a tune with all the rest;
Heard by snatches, the simpler parts
Wake echoes sweet in our lonely hearts;

A DREAM OF HARMONY

But the song the morning stars first sung,
That ever around the worlds has rung,
Flooding the farther space with bliss,
Is meant for another life than this.
Another life?—How understood?
Life may be best, but rest is good;
And the wonderful music we're marching by
May lapse at last to a lullaby.

LOUISIANA BUTTONS

THESE buttons, please?—you'd like to
know

Why, when they are not gold,
I seem to love to wear them so—
Well, child, you shall be told:
These were my boy's,—I had a boy
With eyes like yours, and hair
The very shade, gold and alloy,
The self-same walk and air.

And that is why I like you so,
And why you shall be told
About the buttons—that you know
Are neither gilt nor gold,
However prized, mere trinkets, toys,
Buttons of factory make—
All true, but then they were my boy's—
I wear them for his sake.

Strange buttons, child? It may be so,
A stranger's eyes might deem
These tokens strange, but, do you know,
Part of myself they seem—

LOUISIANA BUTTONS

As much myself, at either wrist
 Their baleful, brazen glow,
As the blue veins that throb and twist
 Through the pale flesh below.

So many years I've worn them there!
 Have pressed them to my lips
So many times with tears and prayer!
 Have slid my finger-tips
Round and around their circles bright,
 My restless nerves to soothe,
So oft, that I have ceased in fright
 Lest I should wear them smooth.

For on them is the seal and sign
 Of all he loved and lost;
Yet often when the sea-birds shine
 I count what these have cost:
Badges of service to the State
 He gave unclaimed, as due;
Pledges of love, as pure as great,
 And proved by death as true.

Change them for diamonds? No, indeed!
 Not for the Koh-i-noor!
His wounded heart again would bleed,
 His sword-arm rise once more,
If all earth's gems could buy from me
 These amulets, these charms,
These relics that I piously
 Enshrine within my arms.

LOUISIANA BUTTONS

When first the din of war arose,
So mere a lad was he
That I felt safe, nor friends, nor foes
Could ask my all of me;
I wept with those who freely gave
Their dearest treasures then;
But hearths and homes and rights to save
Requires not boys but men.

But time passed by—the tide of war
Engulfed our treasures fast,
Each lessening line would closer draw
To those left for the last.
My boy sped on to sixteen years,
In height and thought a man;
And all my hopes and all my fears
Their warfare now began.

I saw his pulse kept time, whene'er
He heard the martial tread,
And bugles calling sweet and clear
The cause of honor plead;
For he had come of fighting strain,
And readily could trace
From seventy-six, and back again,
The rebel in his race.

He'd lay his chin upon my head,—
And I am tall, you know,—
And say, in tones that warned and plead,
"See, mother, how I grow!
I'm tall and strong as other men,
If you do call me 'boy,'"—

LOUISIANA BUTTONS

And he would look so wistful, then,
My bonny lad—my joy!

While friends and kinsmen bore the brunt
Of war he longed to share,
I knew his heart was at the front
And he would follow there;
Yet still I shrank, as one half dead
Evades the final blow;
At last it came,—one day he said
“O, mother! I must go.”

My recreant heart, at first so bold,
Turned coward then and there,
As through its chilling veins there rolled
The slow stream of despair.
What was the State that it should dare
To take my all,—my one?
Conscription's cruel clutches spare
The widow's only son.

But, oh! I never told him this,
Ashamed, afraid, indeed;
I gave at last my farewell kiss,
And bade my boy God-speed;
So leaving me distraught, bereft,
He hastened to the fray—
If fighting's worse than being left
God help the men, I pray!

My boy's first battle was his last;
Glory with arms outspread

LOUISIANA BUTTONS

Awaited him and folds him fast,
Immortal with our dead;
One of the wild-winged sea bird's brood
Fell fighting for his nest,
With all her fire and hardihood,
Her blood upon his breast.


No prison glooms for his proud eyes,
For him no warders rude,
No long-drawn agony that tries
The brave soul's fortitude;
Sweet thoughts of home and me that fill
The eyes that will not weep,
One wild, mad joy, one battle thrill,
And then—the endless sleep.

Or endless bliss—the same they seem,
And morning lingers so
When vigils last, without one dream
To cheat us of our woe.
Now I can sleep—my head is gray—
Save when the gulf winds rave
And the scared oaks their wild arms sway
And their hoar tresses wave.

Ere hurriedly but tenderly
They laid him to his rest,
A comrade cut and sent to me
These buttons from his breast.
To me, from war's red hand, there came
My robbed heart to appease,
Nor trophies, triumphs, spoils nor fame—
Naught but my tears and these.

LOUISIANA BUTTONS

As oft the homesick soldiers sang,
 "The years creep slowly by,"
Gone, long ago, the battle-clang,
 At last the tears are dry;
Hope rises now with every sun,
 Each twilight brings its joy;
For every day may be the one
 When I shall meet my boy.



FAR 'MID THE SNOWS

MY own, along the trackless plain,
Braving the bitter blast,
Love led me to thy door again,
And we are met at last.

We—oh, the heaven that's in that word!
Repeat it softly, love,
I thought 'twould never more be heard
Save in the heaven above.

Like hunter lost on polar floes,
Seeking his hut's dear flame,
Knowing to life or death he goes,
Across the drifts I came.

What care I now for sunless skies,
Wild winds, or circling snows?
Since on thy hearth and in thine eyes
The warmth of welcome glows.

FAR 'MID THE SNOWS

A Southern twilight, soft and warm,
Shall fold these hearts of ours,
And Love shall waft upon the storm
The breath of orange flowers.

THE REMEMBRANCER

WHEN wild flowers push through dead leaves in the
woods,
And birds fly northward light with love and song;
When shy beech leaves peep from their russet hoods,
And thoughts fly youthward as the days grow long,

Oft as I wander lonely, where the ploughs
Turn the dull earth to fresh and vivid brown,
Or on the hillside rest, where drooping boughs
Are faintly budding, looking up or down,

Sometimes on withered leaf or rugged bark,
Sometimes on furrows soft, with sunshine warm,
I see a little creature like a spark
Of fire, or drop of blood, so red its form.

This little hunter of the woods and fields,
Whose scarlet coat betrays him to his foes—
For foes he has, since nothing Nature yields
E'en crawls in peace; and worms prey on the rose—

THE REMEMBRANCER

This tiny thing, of which I only know
Its race still lives and haunts both sun and shade,
I love, for on a dear day, long ago,
One who walked with me, stooping, gently laid

This red spot on his palm, and bade me look,
And as I bent to see it on his hand,
By some mysterious process Memory took
A picture, whose bright colors always stand.

Time cannot fade it, nor can tears bedim,
Nor cares crowd from the canvas any part;
When I see thee, bright speck, thou bringest him
Instantly present to my lonely heart.

Again in spring's glad morning light we stand,
Again we bend together over thee,
And, as we watch thee on his open hand,
Wonder what little creature this may be.

I will not ask cold Science for thy name,
Nor o'er thy insect habits wisely con—
Thou art a wizard, and thy spark of flame
Brings back lost blushes to a cheek that's wan.

Thou art the ruddy drop that warms the veins
Of a pale shade that, ever wistfully,
By the dark river watching still remains,
And draws him from his asphodels to me.

SAVANNAH'S SLAIN

"Come from the four winds, O breath,
and breathe upon these slain, that they
may live."—Ezekiel xxxvii, 9.

COME from the four winds, come, O breath,
And breathe upon these slain,
Revive them from the trance of death,
That they may live again;
Live in their children's veins and names,
In history's deathless tome,
Live in the last true heart that claims
The ties of kin and home.

Long may love's last appeal recall
The memory of their worth,
Given to these who gave their all
Only the sacred earth,
Where heroes' blood and women's tears
May mingle in each bloom
Recurring springs through countless years
Shall offer at each tomb.

SAVANNAH'S SLAIN

O breath, from all the four winds blow
The warmest, gentlest showers,
That their fond earth may proudly grow
Her fairest, sweetest flowers.
Blow balm from every spicy isle,
Blow bird-songs gladdest strain,
That mourners' faded lips may smile
At last above these slain.

O breath, from all the four winds blow
The trumpet blast of fame,
Though these, now deaf and mute, may know
No more of deed or name;
Blow till the rousing echoes float
Far through the peaceful sky,
Till the last sad funereal note
Melts to a tender sigh.

Life was a gift these held as fief
Of honor, lord austere,
Their faithful tenure, sweet as brief,
Lapsed now for many a year.
Vanquished in valiant, hopeless fight,
Their warfare waged in vain,
Life was the only trust or right
Surrendered by these slain.

Peace to their ashes and their shades,
The peace that passeth not;

SAVANNAH'S SLAIN

Forever sheathed, their rusted blades,
They live, the unforgot,
In thoughts that thrill, in hearts that glow,
Life's better part they keep.
O breath, from all the four winds blow
A benison on their sleep!

RIDING AGAINST TIME

MY beautiful bay, my darling May,
Don't fidget and sidle so;
There's no one to see either you or me,
And I only long to go.

To go like the wind and leave behind,
Afloat on the buoyant air,
To be wafted far as the farthest star,
Every doubt or fear or care.

At last, at last, their power is past,
They vanish 'neath Love's glad sway,
As from a ripe rose the leaves uncloset
And flutter and fall away.

So down with your feet in the rhythmic beat
You know and I love so well;
Like the fall and rise of a boat that flies
On the long waves' shoreward swell.

RIDING AGAINST TIME

Away you speed like the wingéd steed
Of the poets, gone astray;
And your flying feet make music sweet
As the rhyme of a roundelay.

I'll whisper to you, friend tried and true,
The secret I kept by flight,
Tho' you must have known, by my touch and tone,
My sweetheart comes to-night.

When his letter came, a sudden flame
Went flashing from heart to face;
The walls oppressed—I could not rest—
And I longed for you and space.

Now all is mine, from the road's white line
To the zenith's azure height;
The horizon-rim is but the brim
Of the cup of my delight.

The sun to the west, in ceaseless quest
Of some long-lost shore, sails by,
And I'll race with him till twilight dim
Floats down thro' the quiet sky.

In the air's pure pool, my cheeks I'll cool
And I'll calm my pulses' flow,
And school my eyes against surprise,
For oh! he must not know—

RIDING AGAINST TIME

He must not know I love him so,
Till life's dark days befall.
When sweet Hope flies, and dear Joy dies,
I'll show him love is all.

Then spurn the ground with your supple bound,
My May, away! away!
For I must ride till even-tide
A race with the fleeting day.

THE STIRRUP-CUP

BRING me a cup of my best old wine,
The wine that came from Spain;
Up to the brim let the sparkles shine,
For deeply I would drain.
'Twas pressed where the sunny Southern ground
Flavor and strength enhanced,
Where the clink of the castanet went round
As the dark-eyed damsels danced.

And all its lightsomeness, all its fire,
Its balm, its zest, its power,
Are little enough for what hearts require
In parting's pallid hour;
And, oh, my page, you could never think
In that curly head bent low,
Of all the pledges I mean to drink
In this cup before we go.

I leave a bride of unnumbered charms,
Stately and fair and mild;
But lately I longed in her tender arms
For the foray fierce and wild:

THE STIRRUP-CUP

Back to the sea will the ebb-tides pour,
And the moon they love resist,
And still the falcon will swoop and soar,
Though he love his lady's wrist.

For the signal all my liegemen wait,
Their steeds impatient fret;
The warder watches within the gate,
The page is bending yet;
But still I tarry to quaff the cup,
And still my fond eyes dwell
On the turret tall, where, farthest up,
She looks her last farewell.

My wavering thoughts run to and fro
And mix like warp and weft:
Here's to the life to which we go!—
Here's to the life we left!
Love and war, they are both delights,
And knightly it is to roam:
Here's to the victor in jousts and fights,—
Here's to the bride at home!

THE MYSTERY OF POOR WILL

✓

WHEN woods are dark and round the circling hill
Black shadows fall, and all the world is still—
Save for the insects' ceaseless serenade;
When scented dew lies cool on grove and glade
When toilers rest and sinless infants sleep,
When memory wakes and idle eyes may weep,
When listening ears to long-hushed voices thrill—
I hear thy plaintive pleading whip-poor-will.
O bird of urgent, pitiful appeals
My heart an interest in thy trouble feels,
Thy case, of poetry and pathos stripped,
What has Will done that thou shouldst want him
whipped?
Has he beguiled thy feathered dame and skipped?
Is Will thy son, in paths of virtue tripped?
Why not let Will be chastened or deterred
By punishment appropriate to a bird?
Why not suggest that wings or claws be clipped?
Why still insist that poor Will must be whipped?
I pause and listen—thro' the twilight still
I hear thy soft entreaty, "Whip poor Will."
Why poor Will, pray, if thou wouldst have him
whipped?
Perhaps through youth and innocence he slipped—

THE MYSTERY OF POOR WILL

Such soft insistence, but so stubborn still!
I feel a greater interest now in Will
Could find excuses for him—even beg,
Poor bird, perhaps an Ishmael from the egg.
What can account for enmity like that?
Vendetta dating back to Ararat?
Or does heredity control the bird
As it does man, for so it is, we've heard
That likes and dislikes in the blood will run,
And what has vexed the sire will vex the son.
Again from dusky boughs and distant hill
Madd'ning monotony comes, "Whip poor Will."
Patience has ceased to be a virtue now,
Would that my eyes could pierce the dark, where thou
Skulking and lurking askest pouting-lipped
Or pouting-billed, that poor Will may be whipped.
Could I but snatch thee from thy ambushade
And bring to light the secret of that shade,
Sure I should find by searching without fail
The coward's feather in thy dark brown tail.
Let no more nonsense and complaints be heard
Come out, whip Will, and show thyself a bird.
Scared at the thought the timid bird has flown
The woods are still, I listen here alone;
In dimmer haunts, in more sequestered vale
His rueful voice "takes up the wond'rous tale."
O enviable bird! not happy quite
Thou hast a grievance none may ever right.
When spring's delight and summer's wealth are here
Still shalt thou pour thy complaints upon the ear,
Still softly chanting thy sad vesper song,
Tell to the world the riddle of thy wrong:

THE MYSTERY OF POOR WILL

And listeners yet unborn on future eves
Shall wonder why thy rancorous spirit grieves,
Women shall pity thy hard aching heart,
And poets all but one, shall take thy part,
Even I, in silence of the summer night
Regret my rashness and thy coward flight,
For with them both perhaps my last chance slipped
Of finding why thou dost want poor Will whipped.

THE MOLE IN THE TENNIS-COURT

NOON, by the clock that in the cheerful hall
Sings at its task of telling off the hours;
Noon, by the rays that from the zenith fall,
Noon, by the morning-glory's folded flowers.

Out in the blaze a maiden sits alone,
Her bright face rosy 'neath her broad hat's screen,
Her garden chair sun-gilded to a throne,—
Of all her tennis-court the warlike queen.

She scans with knitted brows and downcast eyes
The borders of her desecrated land,
Where devious mole-tracks on the greensward rise
Like veins upon an aged, withered hand.

Near, in the shade of close catalpa trees,
The empty hammock tempts her strength in vain;
Erect, alert, disdaining peaceful ease,
She watches warily the sunny plain.

THE MOLE IN THE TENNIS-COURT

Patient and silent, as the anglers bide,
She waits to take the invader by surprise;
A sun-gleam on the weapon at her side—
A fate implacable in fair disguise!

The sharp steel flashes where the grass blades stir
Quick on the sod the foe lies overthrown;
Ugly, repulsive, spite of pretty fur,
Soft as a baby's cheek against my own.

Of the earth earthy, poor benighted brute,
With strange strong hands moulded for toil
and stress;
His delving life and lonely lot they suit,
Incapable of greeting or caress.

A life of gloom, of longings and regrets,
Must his be that these self-made caves inclose;
That only knows the roots of violets,
And mines unwittingly below the rose.

Poor little mole!—I pity him, forsooth?
More blind than he, perchance more earthly too;
He cannot sin against the light or truth,
Content his humble pathway to pursue.

The Father of the sparrows numbers him,
And grants some joy that compensates for light,
While through these corridors so long and dim,
He gropes his days out, in perpetual night.

THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH

NO sweet song bird
That e'er I heard
In flowery dale or thicket,
Can match your voice
Bird of my choice,
My tuneful, cheerful cricket.

For some birds may
Obtrude their lay,
Not knowing how to nick it
In point of time,
Or sweetly chime
With mood, like you my cricket.

No flute e'er blown,
No organ tone,
No banjo could I pick it,
Would soothe my heart
With music's art
Like you, my precious cricket.

THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH

To lands far back
On life's dull track
I seem to take a ticket,
And whirl away—
When blithe and gay
Your whistle blows, my cricket.

Like sweet perfumes
Of faded blooms
In clover when we rick it;
Your happy lay
From far away
Holds echoes, darling cricket.

In life's game tossed
Now won, now lost,
I've almost reached the wicket;
By our hearthstone
I'd be alone
Without you, comrade cricket.

My fireside sprite,
My brownie bright,
Let sportive Fancy trick it
With any name,
'Tis still the same
My faithful, tuneful cricket.

THE SPINNING-WHEEL

WHEN songsters pledge their vows,
 They fly apart in quest
Of all that hedge or boughs
 Can yield to build a nest;
He weaves it out and in,
 And she, from weed or brier,
Brings silk or wool to spin,
 The dower birds desire;
And spinning she sings in tireless rhythm:
"I wish I were, wish I were, wish I were with him."

My love would build for me
 A cottage of our own;
So he has gone to sea,
 And I work here alone;
For him I wait and spin
 The endless flaxen hanks,
While he our home must win
 On foggy fishing banks:
My spinning-wheel sings in tireless rhythm,
"I wish I were, wish I were, wish I were with him."

THE SPINNING-WHEEL

Nights when the sad winds sigh,
My foot and fingers tire;
Nights when the waves run high,
I shiver by the fire;
And oft I stoop to brush
The flax across my face,
For tears will rise and gush,
But must not leave a trace:
My spinning-wheel sings in tireless rhythm,
"I wish I were, wish I were, wish I were with him."

FUNERAL HYMN

THERE is a voice that calls to me
From gloryland, my gloryland,
And thus it sweetly falls to me
From Paradise, my gloryland,
"Come home to me, thou ransomed one,
Thy toils and trials all are done,
The fight is fought, the victory won,
Come home to peace in gloryland.

"Long hast thou wandered to and fro
Afar from me and gloryland,
For through the wilderness they go
Who seek and find the Promised Land;
But I have balm for every ill,
To trouble's waves say, Peace be still,
And every empty heart I fill,
In gloryland, my gloryland."

O Lord! I hear Thy blessed voice
From Paradise, my gloryland;
It makes my longing heart rejoice
To go to Thee and gloryland;

FUNERAL HYMN

Earth's muffled voices die away,
I drop the weary mask of clay,
Thy angel, Death, will lead the way
To gloryland, my gloryland.

LA PUCELLE

HAIL! blesséd among women art thou Maid,
Not Domrémy nor Orléans but all France
Claims thee and honors thee, thou once betrayed,
Thou virgin warrior, fallen by evil chance.

The allied centuries for thee have fought
And Time and thou another victory win;
And to repentance, late but true, are brought
The children, for the fathers' mortal sin.

They in war's seething crucible assayed
Virtue and valor at less worth than gold;
But chastened nations long have rued that trade,
England that bought thee, victim, France that sold.

How sweet thy triumph though so long delayed!
For church and world alike proclaim thy fame;
Didst hear it from thy Voices, hapless Maid?
Martyred and shrouded in thy sheet of flame.

LA PUCELLE

Not yet does auréole crown thy patient head,
Thou hast eternity, but short is life;
And it suffices if the blessed dead
Grant aid and comfort in our daily strife.

Help us to hear the heavenly Voices too,
In humble homes serving home's humble needs,
To follow them, whate'er they bid us do,
Until they lead to life's illustrious deeds.

Help us to know the right, as thou thy King
Knew'st at first sight, and loved'st to thy last breath;
Help us to love it bravely, though it bring
The King's reward, abandonment and death.

IN A TOBACCO FIELD

THE serried ranks with morning's radiance shine,
The lush tobacco laps from row to row
In this fair field, where toil and soil combine
To show what rich results from union grow.

The poor man's crop that children help to tend
And "early birds" like him, with lither grace
O'er dewy leaves and sticky suckers bend,
Lightening their toil with pleasures of the chase,

For here in verdant haunts too well-concealed
The crawling freebooters in ambush lie,
Forage and ravage the contested field,
Eat and are merry and to-morrow die.

Work is the wizard that the world enchants,
And beauty owns his power here to-day,
So think I, seeing down long lines of plants
The lift of leaves that summer breezes sway.

IN A TOBACCO FIELD

Some, tall and queenly rear their flower-crowned stems
In lovely matronhood—the chosen fair
That in their emerald-chaliced diadems
The promise of the future proudly bear.

But most are those whose blooms will never blow
That turn to other's joy their silent grief,
Virginal stems, that gather as they grow
The lost bud's sweetness in the yellow leaf.

Their mottled beauty soon shall be their bane,
Soon shall the headsman come and we behold
The royal trappings stripped from hill and plain
And bare barn walls all hung with cloth of gold.

Mortals, when death blows out the spark divine
Moulder in darkness, to the dust again,
Child of the dust, a happier fate is thine—
Exhaled like incense in the world's blue fane.

Thy faint haze veils the counsels of the sage,
The lover's dreams aspire to heaven with thee;
With thee the warrior calms his patriot rage—
To lowliest hearts a solace thou canst be.

Then spread thy lavish leaves to dew and shower
And gather sunbeams in their secret veins,
For Hope lies dreaming in thy green-gold bower
And Fancy fills her horn with golden gains.

TO AN AEROLITE

THOU mass of molten metal, hard as stone!
What mine in space, unfathomed, unexplored,
Produced thine ore? Where flames, unseen, unknown,
The furnace whence thy seething substance poured?

Doubtful intruder in an alien land,
Like the wrecked sailor by the sailless sea,
Scanning the startling footprint on the sand,
We feel misgivings as we gaze on thee.

Art thou a relic of a ruined world?
A world like ours, perhaps, once young and fair,
Grown old in sin and from its orbit whirled,
Its fiery fragments scattered to the air.

And art thou come to warn us of our doom?
Of judgment rendered ere the final day,
Of homeless souls deprived of even a tomb,
Vagrants dismantled of their native clay?

TO AN AEROLITE

I lay my hand upon thy formless mass,
Strange, stranded messenger, deaf, dumb and blind,
But with the touch no subtle currents pass
To reach the subtler currents of my mind.

In fiery lines along the darkness traced
Or soon or late thy destined course is run;
Perchance the nucleus of some orb displaced,
Perchance the dross from some extinguished sun.

What lent thee wings for thine aerial flight
Across the vast and violet vault on high?
Thy royal progress through the realms of night,
Shaming the scintillant splendors of the sky.

What bade thee light on our grave-nourished grass
And quench thy lustre in its tear-like dew?
No more along ethereal paths to pass,
Inert beneath the enticements of the blue.

Forgotten now, thy boundless ardent quest,
Forgot thy meteor-mates that miss thee not:
Old earth receives her strange, unbidden guest,
Turns round again, and thou, too, art forgot.

IN THE LABYRINTH

ART thou a coward, Theseus, after all?
Groping along this silent, sinuous wall
That, curved like convolution of a shell,
Leads to the den where death and horror dwell;
Gliding with stealthy step and outstretched brand,
Grasping the clew with eager, trembling hand—
For shame! Not so I met my foes before;
Not so, indeed! Upon the open shore,
Where sea and sun bore witness to my fame,
And rocks, reverberant with the glad acclaim
Of grateful men, from plagues and scourges freed;
And I was brave, alike in heart and deed;
Joyed in the strife as in the victory,
And man or brute it mattered not to me.

But man and brute in one,—ay, that's a foe
Whose weapons and whose warfare none may know
Save the mute victims of his monstrous rage,
Flung for his quarry in this dismal cage.
Ah! when I saw the sweet, pale virgins weep,
And saw the black sails droop upon the deep,

IN THE LABYRINTH

My heart beat high—I could not see them go
Unchampioned to their doom; and now I know
In part how fared the tribute maids that came
Ere I did, to this spawn of wrath and shame.
Poor timid creatures, faltering to their death,
Hearts in their mouths, waiting with bated breath
The fierce, hoarse bellow and the furious rush;
Hand in hand groping, blind with tears that gush
For love and home, and wild, indignant woe
That men the cravens were to let them go,
Tribute to cowardice—lost evermore,
Nearing each step the cruel horns that gore,
The two-fold terror worse than man or beast,
Ruthless and ravenous for his annual feast.

Gods! was that sound behind me, or before?—
This winding way confuses me the more,
The more I turn—stop, let me steel my heart.
I came to conquer; I will do my part;
I will avenge the innocence he slew,—
The royal maid who granted me the clew
Gave love and hope as well; I need no more.
E'en now I hear the rousing monster roar;
But I will trust, to guide me and to save,
This fragile filament a woman gave.

THE SEVENTH SEA-BIRD

FAR to the south the low shore sloped from view,
And all seemed ocean there that was not sky,
And both seemed bent in all their depths to vie
With each in azure, answering hue to hue.
Rapt with delight, I gazed upon the two,
When, in a line, with motions swift and true,
Between the upper and the nether blue,
Seven stately sea-birds flew.

The six are naught but fishers, fleet and strong,
Plying their task or idling in the air,
By force of need or pleasure borne along;
But in the seventh, whichsoe'er it be,
I see the symbol of life's tragedy,
The strange embodiment of love's despair.
Are thine the eager wings that lead the van
Marking the unseen pathway for the rest?
Thine the fierce eyes that sky and ocean scan,
Wild with the anguish of the ceaseless quest?
Or worn and weary, dost thou follow there
Lagging along, the last, the loneliest?
Between the mocking sky, the insensate sea,
O seventh bird! my fancy flies with thee.

THE SEVENTH SEA-BIRD

As one who, dreaming, hears a serenade,
And of the dream the music seems a part,
I hear the air by unseen exiles played;
The words come back like memories odors bring,
"Good-night, farewell, my own true heart"—
The old sad song a sweetheart used to sing.
The sad flutes sigh, the violin strings complain,
The 'cello mourns, the viol sobs amain,
The wind notes like grief's tempest wax and wane;
Then all their voices join and tell again
Love's hopeless, speechless pain.

O lost true heart! that eyes and spirit miss,
Far from this cheerful, sunlit, sounding shore,
My fancy goes, a fond Persephone,
To seek thee in the silent realm of Dis.
Canst thou by Lethe's verge remember me,
And art thou lonely in the ghostly throng,
Lonely and sad like me forevermore?
Are the unnumbered years more like, more long?
When spring comes around again thou canst not tell
In dim fields of immortal asphodel;
Nor sap nor blood can stir that life serene,
Thou dost not know the graveyard grass is green,—
Its cypress glad with songs of wooing birds;
Thou dost not hear our old familiar tune
That moves my heart with sweet suggested words;
And now it dies away o'er wave and dune.
For thee the shadow, love, for me the light:
The darkness deepens and again we part. . . .
"Good-night, farewell, my own true heart
A thousand times, good-night."

THE LONELY RIDE

UP, and away,
My filly gay,
I'll ride afar to-day,
While the sky is fine
And the air like wine
And the sunshine looks like May.

I turn aside
From the highway wide
And down the old road ride,
Where I used to go,
Long, long ago
With my sweetheart by my side.

Like a frost-scared rose
My pale cheek glows
As the scented south wind blows,
And my pulses fill
With a youthful thrill
So fast the filly goes.

THE LONELY RIDE

On the rich lowland
In close rows stand
Like the tents of an Indian band;
The corn shocks brown,
And far adown,
There flows the river grand.

The sweet wild note
From the field lark's throat
The roving breezes float—
As swift I pass
By the glistening grass
Toward the blue-hill-line remote.

Here the squirrel fleet
With nimble feet,
Seeks his high and safe retreat,
In the woods ablaze
With a thousand rays
Where light and color meet.

For an instant brief
A falling leaf
Like the gold of a ripened sheaf,
Whirls by my face
With an airy grace
And the touch awakes my grief.

Autumn again—
Long years of pain
Have dragged their 'length'ning chain,'
Since gay and glad
Where one goes sad
There rode a happy twain.

THE LONELY RIDE

My eyelids fill,
My heart stands still
And the tide of life runs chill;
As in a glass
The lost years pass,
And we ride as lovers will.

Again 'tis spring
And the bluebirds sing
And the redbirds' carols ring
As through the woods
Pale-green with buds
Our loping horses swing.

The air flies past
With fragrant blast
And we seem to fly as fast
Till with lips apart
And bounding heart
I draw the reins at last.

Our horses spent
His proud head bent
His hand on my pommel leant,
We rest by the stream
Where the ripples gleam
Thro' grass with flowers besprent.

As blue his eyes
As the violet's dyes,
And they look with glad surprise
On my blushing cheeks
As he softly speaks
A word of the love I prize.

THE LONELY RIDE

Come back, come back
To thy lonely track,
Remember the storm and wrack;
No more for thee
Love's dreams may be
For love thou shalt always lack.

One sad spring day
He rode away
Proud in his brand-new gray;
And ere it was old
Lay stark and cold
In a lost field's fiercest fray.

My hopes are dead
As the leaves that spread
This carpet the wild things tread;
But heaven is blue
Tho' far off too
And ever hangs overhead.

Ah, never yet
Was saddle set
On horse could outride Regret!
Fly filly, fly,
For even the sky
Is dim to eyes that are wet.

THE STAR IN THE EAST

ONCE in the Orient blazed a sudden star,
As though God said again: Let there be light—
It led the Wise Men from their homes afar,
It led the shepherds from the fields by night.

The Wise Men with exceeding great joy gazed
On the strange sign—looked for in vain so long;
The simple shepherds sore afraid, amazed,
Found comfort in the holy angels' song.

Glory to God, they sang, and on earth peace,
Good will toward men,—the shining host of heaven
Whose happy hallelujahs never cease,
Sang low for mortal ears that bless'd even.

How many hopes were brightened with that star!
How many hearts were lightened with that lay!—
But from adoring eyes it vanished far,
And from rapt ears the music died away.

THE STAR IN THE EAST

All silent now the darksome fields of Yule,
No angel anthem thrills the listening air,
And of the orb that high and low did rule,
No glimmer, though we seek it everywhere.

Where is the star?—down what abyss of heaven
Comet-like plunged from cruel earth to hide?
With the lost darling of the sisters seven
In outer darkness does it yet abide?

Some happier Christmas may it not return,
The harbinger of peace that tarries still,
And in its vacant orbit once more burn
To warm our hearts with promise of good will?

POET AND POETASTER

SEE how common—where e'er we pass
The webs of morning float and gleam,
From fences, bushes and dewy grass,
How easily made they are! 'twould seem,
A glint of sunshine, a silken thread
Twirled like a wheel thro' the morning mist;
But the pattern is in the spider's head
And only he knows the shuttle's twist;
And out of his life he still must spin,
Perhaps with pain, at least with loss,
Drawing from treasure stored within
The shining lengths of his silken floss.
Cushion and bobbin and pins we try,
And over our thread and patterns grieve:
It is but lace at last, we cry,
Only the spider the web can weave.

Beads are plenty that look like pearls,
Round and lucent on many a strand,
Lending a lustre to lovely girls,
For art mocks nature with skillful hand;
But the pearl of price an empress wears,
That ransom of even a king might be,

POET AND POETASTER

Is the treasure the desperate diver dares
To grapple for, down in the dreadful sea.
In dim sea-dungeons his days are spent
Who molds that pearl in his secret clasp;
But rays of dawn and of moonlight blent
Are caught and fused by his magic grasp,
Till destiny drives the diver down,
He rests serene tho' the waters swirl;
He knows for his gem there waits a crown,
For only the shell-fish can form the pearl.

What has the poet, we others lack?
That is the secret no words reveal;
Only the difference 'twixt white and black—
Difference the quick and dead must feel.
Vainly with plastic art we mold
Our polished statues of living things,—
They stand before us silent, cold:
Only the sun-touched image sings.
Peasant or scholar, it matters not,
The poet's birthright his words disclose,
As hid 'mid brambles, forlorn, forgot,
The sweet-brier's breath betrays the rose.
But, ah, for the hands that may not reach
Where the laurel wreaths hang sweet and high!
Ah, for the lips whose faltering speech
Is sadder far than their wistful sigh!

“THAT’S FOR REMEMBRANCE”

SWEET scent of wild Kentucky mint!
The poignant perfume brings to me
Scenes that the rolling years imprint
On memory’s scroll indelibly;
The shout of youth, the laugh of mirth,
All the glad music loved of old,
The breath of lips long sealed in earth,
The clasp of hands long still and cold.

How oft our childish feet have trod
Along the winding, rippling creek,
The mint among the bluegrass sod,
Jumping from rock to rock to seek
The water-snake eluding still
The swift pursuit, the eager throw,
And with hereditary skill
Escaping to the pool below.

And then the foolish crawfish peered
From shelter of his slimy stone,
And flounced along till, harried, jeered,
We pounced upon him for our own;

THAT'S FOR REMEMBRANCE

And then our little henchman bore,
With wily, woolly head, elate,
The prize off in the gourd whose store
Of worms and crickets was our bait.

That ancient mint, I smell it yet,
Quintessence of our sport and fun,
Trampled and tangled, bruised and wet,
Most fragrant when most trod upon;
We fished with many a fancy fling,
With many a jest and gibe and boast;
The little henchman with his string
And pinhook always caught the most.

Oh, sweeter scent in after time!
When our two horses close abreast,
Rattling the rocks in clashing chime
Among the mint their sure hoofs pressed.
Mid-summer then, and to the leaves
The added sweetness of the flowers,
But tenderest memory mutely grieves,
No more, no more—the rest is ours.

All the rich life forever past
Breathes in this perfume's affluence,
Hope's vanished vision vague and vast,
The spirit's long-lost innocence,
All that death's subtle mystery
Can dumbly show or darkly hint:
No garden rosemary for me,
But sprigs of wild Kentucky mint.

COMPENSATION

O'ER the glad sunshine of a summer day
A shadow passed, stealthy, and strange and drear;
Birds silenced suddenly their happy lay
And sought with trembling wings their nestlings near;
In the dim light the rose's blanchéd cheek
Looked tear-bedewed, and flowers that close at night
Watched wonderingly the pale sun's narrowing streak
And drew their curtains on the dismal sight.
When chill blasts shook the shuddering lily bell,
When earth seemed changed as by a wizard's spell,
Far up thro' violet depths of darkening air
A star shone out, to prove that heaven was there.

O'er the glad sunshine of my happy youth
A sudden shadow came like an eclipse;
Shame not my own, falsehood that marred my truth,
And hushed the words of love upon my lips.
My hopes, an airy flock that sang and flew,
Came frightened back to seek their silent nest;
The flower of joy its fading petals drew
To hide the sacred secret in its breast.

COMPENSATION

When waiting like a doomed man for his knell—
When earth seemed changed as by a wizard's spell,
Thro' whelming depths of darkening despair
Thy love shone out, to prove that heaven was there.

SUB ROSA

O NIGHTINGALE! the foolish bud half grown
Dreamed of thy love-song, folded here apart
From listening roses: waking with a start
Of sudden rapture now she claims her own:
'Tis moonlight, and thy rose is just full-blown,
Not one reluctant petal hides her heart;
All that she learned in budhood is the art
Of lavishing her sweets on thee alone.
O light-winged lover! leave her not to-night,
She has no morrow,—all she has is now,
Sing to her only, while the hours fly fast;
Sing of the transiency of all delight,—
She asks no perjuries of pledge or vow
But to be thine, thine only, thine at last.

O rose! ere thou hadst budded, in the nest
I dreamed of thee and love, of thee and song,
And all the moonlit hours till this seemed long.
Against thy perfumed heart I lean my breast,—
Frailer it seems and sweeter than the rest:
To-morrow's wind may bring thee wreck or wrong,

SUB ROSA

But these brief hours to thee and me belong:
List, love, and hear joy's inner grief expressed.
Alas, the transiency of all delight!
Why does thy perfect fragrance soon exhale,—
My marvelous music in dim silence close?
Why does our tryst fall on the shortest night?—
While still the rose longs for the nightingale,
And still the nightingale would love the rose.

A WOODNOTE'S BURDEN

I AM the hawk, the wild, the free,
Fearless and tameless, and happy so;
Perched on the top of the tallest tree
I plume at ease in the sunshine's glow.
I peer and dive in the depths of light,
Or soar on the wind as it sweeps me by,
The powers of the air permit my flight,
The earth pays tribute:—I rule the sky.

The eagle was forced to abdicate
And I am king of the feathered clans;
My only regent my keen-eyed mate,
My subject whichever my talon spans;
The bluebird timidly trills of spring,
The cardinal warbles his love in dread,
And at the first glint of my silver wing
The thickets are silent,—the birds are fled.

Sometimes I light on a lowly fence
When woodland hunting and quarry fail,
And silently, suddenly, swooping thence
On a swift reconnoissance round I sail.

A WOODNOTE'S BURDEN

The field mouse burrows, the fieldlarks hush,
The quick quails cower where leaves lie loose,
And warned from his form, with a startled rush
The rabbit runs waving his flag of truce.

Once I was sacred; a long, long while
I held my place with divinities,
And far away by the shining Nile
On tablets of stone are my effigies.
Now all is changed, and the heart of man
Is as hard toward me as my own toward prey,
And I hate man, and as best I can
Challenge my enemy, day by day.

I ravage the broods that his housewife rears
I scare the cravens that cackle loud
The red-combed cock in his crowing fears
When my shadow flits over him like a cloud.
I know that a bullet waits to pierce
This proud glad heart, though I know not when,—
But list to the hawk's voice, shrill and fierce;
I am the king till then—till then!

MEMORY

ONCE in a home whose memories yet
 Console a lone heart heavy laden,
There lived a child, a perfect pet
 From cherub babe to budding maiden;
Child of sweet looks and sweeter ways,
 The kind foreboding nurses know
And quaintly call, "too good to raise."
 No wonder that we loved her so,
We cherished her, caressed and kissed her,—
The household joy, the little sister.

A wild-wood flower, unsought, unknown,
 Perished before its perfect blooming,
Whose fragrance from the dim past blown
 Life's twilight hour is still perfuming.
I could not covet gift or grace
 Of hers whose joy was always mine,
But oft I envy her her place
 In earth's calm breast and memory's shrine:
How fair she seems adown times' vista—
Still young, still dear, the little sister !

MEMORY

Our Father many mansions hath,
For Heaven is large as love, not merit,
And thither throng by many a path
The blessed children who inherit;
But were it measured straight foursquare
With golden reed to great white throne,
By best Beatitude an heir
She would but come into her own;
The gates of pearl could not resist her—
The pure in heart, the little sister.

But words are vain; they falter, fail,
Leave the long silence still unbroken,
Her home is now within the veil
Where mortal love is never spoken;
Yet in the cup of that life's bliss
The drop that makes it overflow
May be a memory of this,
And she may recollect and know—
Know how we loved her, mourned her, missed her,
The early lost, the little sister.

IN A LIGHTHOUSE

NIGHT on the sea, and storm besides;
Shut in my silent cage,
I hear the wild waves lap its sides
And shake it in their rage.

They howl and roar, they leap and lash;
I cannot hear to-night
The death scream of the birds that dash
Against the luring light.

No light but mine shines on their wrath,
The gentle moon has hid,
And the cloud-followers round her path
Glimpse of her flight forbid.

Darkness has swallowed all but me;
But I the storm defy;
No terror has this raging sea,
No gloom this pall-like sky.

IN A LIGHTHOUSE

The sea long since has done its worst,
When, smiling treacherously,
It quenched the light my love had nursed,
And left me lone and free.

Free as the wind, the birds, the sky,
Not chained to this lone rock;
These narrow walls that barred and high
The boast of freedom mock.

On the green shore, by flowery graves
The mourners watch and weep;
Then why not I beside these waves,
The cradle of her sleep?

Here burns the lamp before her shrine
That, from the sea's alarms,
May light some happier love than mine
Home to encircling arms.

One with the sea I seem to grow,—
We cannot rest apart;
Together in its depths shall flow
My treasure and my heart.

When, through life's mist, death's trumpet-call
Comes like a voice benign,
Here let my merging being fall
A tear in ocean's brine.

THE ARROW-HEAD

'T WAS in the Dark and Bloody Ground
Where once, o'er hill and vale,
To many a lonely lick there wound
The bison's trampled trail;
One day, full many an April back,
A man and maid alone
Followed unwittingly this track
Long lost and overgrown.

They reached a melancholy wood,
Lorn remnant of the past,
Where yet primeval giants stood
Defying drouth and blast;
But where the storm-wrecked boles lay prone
Some moss-green, half-entombed,
The cheerful morning sunlight shone,
The early wild flowers bloomed.

The sky was one blue benison,
The air was ecstasy,
In all the wood no denizen
So blithe as he and she.

THE ARROW-HEAD

They heard the redbird whistle clear,
They heard his mate reply,
Like tropic blossoms wafted near
They saw them flitting by.

From dripping dell to sunny knoll
They hunted like the bee;
He called the names on April's roll,—
She answered, "Here are we."
They plucked no flower; "Live and let live,"
She said, "may none molest,
For dying flowers no pleasure give
To those that love them best."

Then to a mossy seat they came,
And tracing on the ground
Among the withered leaves his name,
With spicewood wand, she found
A flinty Indian arrow-head
Of cruel shape and make,—
She eyed it with a look of dread
As if she saw a snake.

"O love," she said, "how many years
Have buried out of sight
This token ill of blood and tears
That I have brought to light!"

THE ARROW-HEAD

Would I had never stirred a leaf
Above the haunted spot
Where lay this relic of some chief
Long vanished, long forgot,

"Perhaps some foolish, happy deer
This taught of pain and death;
Or else some hardy pioneer
It balked of fame and breath;
Or, worst of all, some frontier maid,
Mourning his unknown doom,
For him did watch and wait and fade
Into an early tomb."

And saying this she softly sighed—
"Fanciful girl," said he,
"People have lived and loved and died
For ages past, and we
Come in our turn and live our life,
And only leave behind
Some token of our love or strife
For later hands to find.

"Beneath this mossy cairn we'll leave
The inauspicious thing,
Let us not moralize or grieve:
We love, and it is Spring!
Come on, sweetheart"—and so they went,
But to the balmy air,
And to the bliss of their content,
A change came unaware.

THE ARROW-HEAD

The violet seemed to know its fate,
Withered as soon as blown;
The wood-dove calling to his mate
Cooed in a minor tone;
A shadow passed across her brow,
And through her girlish heart
That beat so quick and glad just now,
An arrow seemed to dart.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

"A sonnet is a moment's monument—
Memorial from the soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour."

D. G. ROSSETTI

I

WOULD I might lay a wreath upon his tomb
Sweeter than all love's offerings to the dead,
Lines twined to decorate his marble bed,
Each syllable a bud, each word a bloom,
All redolent with memory's perfume—
Far subtler scent than ever blossom shed—
An epitaph with tearful eyelids read
By all who love and mourn love's earthly doom.
Oh! for words sweeter than the angels' song,
Than mother-tongue when heard in hostile lands;
Fonder than vows that join youth's eager hands,
Than last farewells sob-broken, low and long;
Love's blighted stem revived some sonnets' space
Shall strew remembrance on his resting place.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

II

How sad life seems when all is said and done
And we sit quiet waiting for the close;
Back to the past the roving fancy goes,
Sadly computes how one from two leaves one,
Sadly reviews the lonely course now run,
Dreams of the voyage, whither no one knows,
Down the swift stream that ever swifter flows
Ending perhaps where once it was begun.
But memory's joys our craving hearts infold
And safe from Time's effacing touches keep
Like virgin nuggets hid from bartered gold,
Pure in some vein of unscaled mountain-steep;
Or the fresh water drops the shell-fish hold
Inviolat below the briny deep.

III

Once in the spring, the gladdest of all springs,
We stood beside a still, pellucid lake
Watching the swans their stately courses take,
Blurring its mirror with a chain of rings.
Downward they sailed with wings like angel wings
White as the snow, the fresh unfallen flake,
The swift, strong paddles, waving in the wake,
Seeming unmeet for such ethereal things;
Bending their necks with serpentine suave bows
They dipped their beaks to catch the bread we threw,
Bright drops rolled off their plumage, round the prows
Of the fair fleet caressing ripples drew,
Then pair by pair, content, they sailed along—
What made me think of a sad, lone swan song?

A SONNET SEQUENCE

IV

Once in the gloaming of a summer day
We watched the moonflowers open to the moon
That, full-orbed for the tryst, had risen soon;
Each tremulous bud upon its eager spray
Star-folded, star-inclosed had hid away
Its secret from the brazen gaze of noon,
To breathe it to the all-compelling moon
That even the wind crazed billow crests obey.
To lesser moons the thrilling star buds burst
White as the great one glistening far above,
Perfumed like Eden ere the ground was cursed;
"Your heart is like the bud, the moon is love"
He said, "as pure as these will be the flower
That blooms in love's predestinated hour."

V

Can I forget that calm eve by the pond
Wherein the wild geese swam and dived at play,
While sunset glories flamed and died away
Above the low hills lying far beyond,
And we who all unwittingly were fond
Sat on the bank, idle and glad as they
And he of weed stems made, as idlers may,
A cross with grass blades bound? Life's elfin wand
Has waved, and all is gone like dreams and hopes,
Or like the seedball scattered with a breath.
The birds flew far, the lover sleeps in death,
The pond is changed to empty grassy slopes
But still I keep and hide the fragile cross,
Sacred memorial of love and loss.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

VI

In spangled space the glittering Scorpion basked
And red Antares sparkled like a fire,
Love's bale-fire warning of disaster dire.
My blushes by the scented dusk were masked,
He could not hear the answer that he asked
And as he leaned, the white rose leaning nigher
Trembled, exhaled and drooped, while redder, higher,
The flickering beacon burned. If I were tasked
To tell why then my heart sank bodefully,
Or why June's joy holds a regret for me,
'Twere vain, its secret links love only knows;
'Tis when some night alone with memory
I breathe a fragrance unaware, and see
Our constellation and a dim white rose.

VII

Strolling along the river's verge we go
Pausing for pebbles, for a mussel shell,
Singing a snatch to hear the echoes tell
The distant hills that Afton's waters flow
As gently as our river shimmering so.
Then we pick up smooth stones and launching well
Our little fleet that rival hands propel
We watch them skipping till they plunge below.
O foolish, idle, unforgotten hour!
Childishly happy, little did we dream
Fate taught by parable beside that brink;
Hearts buoyed by love's lightsome, magic power
Leap in the sunshine on life's fleeting stream,
Till suddenly in swirling depths they sink.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

VIII

“Of all our summer ’tis the longest day”
He said, “oracle almanac says so,—
You who make all hours short, come, let us go
And prove it false.” First wended we our way
Across warm grass to hear the ripples play
On mossy stones their slumberous fugue, where low
The willow branches dipped, and to and fro
Drowsy accompaniment would nod and sway.
The radiant air of summer at its best
Was bitter-sweet with scent of willow bark,
A lonely little heron rose and flew
Up shady windings to its secret nest;
Of those bright moments gathered to the dark
Only that breath of bitter-sweet seems true.

IX

Once we sat silent side by side to hear
The songs of one who sang of love and dole;
The plaintive music seemed to wring my soul,
Love seemed the sport of fate, as dread as dear;
Keen apprehension pierced me like a spear,
Across my heaven a threat'ning storm cloud stole,
Emotion swelled my heart beyond control
And down the cheek next his escaped a tear.
And did he see the tear? I never knew.
Shamefaced and still I listened with the rest
Till the sad notes to sadder silence died,
But I was comforted, as if he threw
Fond arms around me, weeping on his breast,
'Though we were sitting silent side by side.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

X

Once we were reading poems and we came
To one so love-wrought, passionate and chaste
That all the blood forsook my heart in haste,
Fled to my cheeks, and like a lambent flame
Leapt to the brown locks, leaving to love's shame
No hiding place; and as the prairie game
Ringed by the fire rolling round the waste,
Will stand at bay, my lowered lashes faced
Dim lines whereon I only read his name.
Then—oh! I love him better for it now,
He made his love the shield to save my pride,
Seemed not to see, and leant his head aside
Until the fiery flood from cheeks and brow
Ebbd utterly—and with a radiant look
Turned o'er for me a new leaf in the book.

XI

Was it just now or was it long ago
That Love upon my lips his signet set
In sign of sovereignty? for I forget—
Now, and forever, seemed to meet and flow
Like stream and ocean wherein swift and slow
Mingle eternally—'twas now and yet
'Twas long ago, because the lips that met
Were red with youth as poppies when they blow,
And Love's are cold, and mine are fading fast
Paled by perpetual vows of constancy,
Yet ever on their withered bloom I feel,—
As in that dateless moment of the past—
Now and forever blent eternally,
The glowing impress of Love's sacred seal.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

XII

That long-lost summer morn I live it yet
And we are rambling down the deep-worn lane
Through a new world created for us twain;
My heart is happy tho' my eyes are wet
But his beam cloudless joy, when shyly met.
On rails where lichens creep o'er weatherstain
We lean—across the clover floats a strain
All love, part ecstasy and part regret.
It is the field larks, singing as they fly
Songs short and sweet as love's flight heavenward,
The ecstasy soars past them to the sky
But the regret drops with them to the sward;
Even a little bird's heart with its mate
Must hold some dim foreshadowing of fate.

XIII

Once when he held my hand, along my wrist
With slow caressing finger tip he traced
A blue vein's current till it interlaced
With other wandering streamlets and he missed
The one he followed, then he laughed and kissed
The azure network, saying—"Let it go.
I own the source from which these rivers flow
And need not cavil at a turn or twist."
How often now the words come back again,
Lightly and fondly said so long ago!
None seek among the poor wrist's tangled skein
The thread he sought, his little, lost blue vein,
And though the kiss is cold, the laughter flown,
While the pulse beats the heart is still his own.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

XIV

I loved him as the magnet loves the steel,
As the far mountain torrent loves the main,
As early wild flowers love the first warm rain,
As tides the moon, as melting bergs the feel
Of prism-painting sunshine, as the keel
Loves the kind waves that rock it home again,
As hunted wanderers love the guiding Wain,
As devotees the altar where they kneel.
Sometimes a ghastly terror chills my heart
Lest love should be a product of the flesh,
Flower of the grass that withers in an hour;
What then can soothe Death's sting when lovers part?
Only to dream love blooms forever fresh,
Rooted in dust but still the soul's pure flower.

XV

I love him as the lone harp loves the hands
That once drew music from its silent strings,
I love him as the caged bird loves the wings
That bore it far to free and flowery lands,
As ocean-weary waves the sunny sands
Where once they lapsed, as leafless trees lost springs,
As the stray Pleiad in dim wanderings
Loves the six circling with the shining bands.
And does he love me now in any wise
And is our past, remembered as a dream
In that long sleep that silenced mortal vow?
The sepulchre is dumb, the heart replies:
Parting and death are other than they seem
And he who loved thee once may love thee now.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

XVI

When in the empty silence of the night
His sudden memory the void o'erflows,
Down its worn track the halt heart leaping goes,
Gropes in dim paths for shreds of old delight
Left on life's brambles in youth's heedless flight,
Evokes lost hours still sweeter than repose
That hide in daytime and their haunts disclose
When all is dark and blank to outward sight.
As the full moon uplifts when day is gone
The apparition of the vanished sun,
His recollection brings of love's quick joy
The pale dead semblance, that encroaching dawn
And the oblivion of the years that run,
Like wind-chased clouds, may hide but not destroy.

XVII

Sometimes on summer nights when we were gay
We'd choose a star and claim it for our own,
A wondrous orb it is as ever shone,
And while we watched its scintillating ray,
Warm as a welcome, we would laugh and say
That we would live there when we had outgrown
Our little earth and like fledged birds had flown
From the old nest forever, far away.
Now one is gone, whither and wherefore sent?
This earth had room enough for both we knew,
We did not claim Antares save in play
And could we only meet we'd be content
With just a foothold somewhere in the blue,
Some nameless spark in the vast Milky-Way.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

XVIII

How beautiful the autumn woodlands were
When we went wandering round their rustling ways!
The farthest hills were draped in faintest haze,
The frost-dyed leaves fell with no breeze to stir;
Glimpses we caught of squirrels' plume-like fur
Saw Indian turnips' tiny torches blaze,
And from the tangled briers' motley maze
We heard the startled covey's hurried whirr.
The rabbit leapt from his sly covert bold
With terror, the gay crows were garrulous,
Far in the blue the silver hawk wings shone,
The happy earth was doffing green for gold—
But all the splendor now seems fabulous
To one who treads the rustling paths alone.

XIX

With slackened reins we rested on the hill;
Linked hills, green, russet, veiled in misty blue
Enchained the river in the distant view,
The air was all a-dazzle, and so still
We heard the woodpecker's persistent bill,
The soft duet of doves' wings as they flew,
The busy grumbling bumblebee's ado
And cricket stragglers fifeing faint and shrill.
Mutely we gazed enchanted at the scene,
Then his horse stamped and snorted and the spell
Was broken, and earth's clamor reached our ears;
But that lone height is Memory's demesne
And golden autumn, golden silence dwell
Perpetual there through all the changing years.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

XX

Sometimes, across the midnight's wakeful gloom
A dream flits sudden as a shooting star
Trailing its radiance from some gulf afar,
And youth and joy escaping from their tomb
Are present, and the phantom scenes assume
The old reality; no questions mar
Our full felicity, for what we are
Is what we were, love's embers we relume.
But as the darkness overwhelms the gleam,
So suddenly the vision dear is gone,
And eyes that weep anew the perished dream,
Watch wearily for slow-returning morn,
And youth and joy, wasted and withered, seem
Spectres that vanish at approach of dawn.

XXI

There is a word no mockery can profane
Nor use nor misuse turn to commonplace;
Genius has chosen it for crowning grace
Of deathless stanzas: all love's loss and pain
Breathe in its syllables, and they explain
The ancient sorrow of our saddened race,
The vague presentiment with which we face
The future, seeking comfort there in vain.
The hieroglyphics spell it, and the song
Of Memnon chanted it, the desert Sphinx
With locked lips seems to croon it o'er and o'er,
The wind harp wails it, and the wave along
The stubborn shore beats its white breast and shrinks
Back to abysses moaning, Nevermore.

A SONNET SEQUENCE

XXII

Adieu! adieu! 'tis parting o'er again
To end the task that love on memory laid,
To wreath a chaplet sacred to his shade,
Linked flower to flower like a votive chain—
But all the sweetness here is linked with pain
And every flower of which the wreath is made
Seems but the secret of some hope betrayed,
For all is vanity, and love is vain.
Adieu! adieu! words fitting for a close,
No sweeter words lamenting love could speak.
Bloom immortelles, on his memorial stone!
I tarry, but his venturous spirit goes
Past love and loss, past life itself to seek
The unknown God and all his vast unknown.

XXIII

Is there some word that love has known since Eve
But left unsaid? Oh! might I find it now
To bind it like a bay leaf for his brow
Or clasp therewith this wildflower crown I weave,
The word love learned when first it learned to grieve
But finding comfort left it to endow
Some dirge's poverty, some holier vow
Than life's inconstant lovers should receive.
For one that death will keep forever true
Love's sweet old words seem lip-worn, trite, and pale
As roses lying in a book—I fail
For lack of love's lost word we never knew
To make this garland worthy and complete,
And lay the imperfect offering at his feet.

A VAIN DESIRE

O H! might fate yet in granting one request
Requite my heart for all denied it here,
Let its loved language draw some happier tear
From saddened eyes, in some responsive breast
Revive some memory blest, and last and best
Leave lingering in the world's attentive ear
Some parting words 'twould unforgot hold dear
When lips that breathe them sealed in silence rest.
In vain! with music of the poet's songs
Mere speech can find no harmony, no part;
The stringless lute despairs while still it longs;
The tuneless bird in love with melody,
Yearning to join the envied minstrelsy,
Listening to nightingales, may break its heart.

“BEYOND THESE VOICES”

THAT all is vanity, we know—alas!
The earth is green with dead men's dust and tears
And rich with nourishment of perished years;
But, as the chasms open in the grass
To hide our loved ones, still we long to pass
The mystic portal guarded by our fears
And from the night whence nothing reappears
Bring them to wait where cares and doubts harass.
Of all they had is not their sleep the best?
May not even love pale star-like in a sky
Lit by their dawn's undreamt lucidity?
Long since, lone Orpheus dared his baffled quest,
And still across the ages comes the cry,
Far off, forlorn, and faint—"Eurydice!"

THE VESPER SONG

✓
NOW robins hop along the greening grass
And sing at sundown in the leafless trees;
The sap wells up at thought of days like these—
Days of lost springs that budded but to pass.
So stirs my heart; and could my life amass
Treasures from earth's unnumbered argosies,
Precious as pearls in pure, unsounded seas,
Memory's poor relics would their worth surpass.
O robin-redbreast, sad thy sweetest tone!
Sweet as a voice now mute that sang for me;
My nest was never built, my mate has flown
To shores unknown, beyond the silent sea;
But listening in the twilight here alone,
Youth, love, and longing, all come back to me.

SCHUBERT'S SERENADE

(AS PLAYED BY THE MEXICAN BAND AT THE WORLD'S
EXPOSITION, NEW ORLEANS)

MAGICIANS of the South interpreted
The Austrian's dream, and music's magic told
What failing hearts and lips had left unsaid,
By that hushed throng from nations young and old.
Sun's fire, snow's purity, and sweets of every air
Blent in the strains, as with no alien tone
Joy throbbed, and passion plead, and love's despair
Sighed its farewell. No need to feel alone—
Though far from ice-girt home or native bowers—
Where eyes around us shone with our delight,
Or met our own as dim with tears as ours.
Why mourn the language lost on Babel's height,
When nature grants us music, by her grace,
The mother-tongue of every heart and race.

MIDSUMMER DAY'S DREAM

WOULD I might set to song one summer day—
The tremulous expectancy of dawn,
The dewy radiance of the budding morn,
High noon's cerulean splendors, and the play
Of breeze-blown shadows 'neath the supple sway
Of leafy limbs; the lingering hours drawn
Through growing glories till the sun is gone,
Loath in the golden depths to sink away . . .
Might I find words to fit the south wind's sigh,
The clover's breath, the homing wild bee's hum,
The insects' keen reiterated mirth,
The chirp of birds that teach their young to fly,
The vocal joy of creatures we call dumb,
The speechless gladness of the teeming earth!

NAPOLEON AT ST. HELENA

IMPERIAL eagle, caged on this lone rock,
King-maker, kingdom-breaker, at whose beck
Armies and navies challenged rout or wreck ;
Thy standard shattered now by battle shock;
Thy legions scattered like a harried flock;
Thy compass narrowed to a sea-girt speck,
Thou whom no bonds could hold, no scruples check—
The Furies follow thee, the Fates do mock!
The petty tyranny, the venom'd spite
Of a small soul in a small sphere supreme,
Thou dost endure as helpless captives must;
The effacing ocean bounds thy longing sight,
Days drag, and nights with sleepless vengeance seem
To flaunt the star that did betray thy trust.

NAPOLEON IN THE INVALIDES

FROM the lorn island in the distant main—
The rock that marks how far a meteor fell—
Freed from his alien sepulchre's lone cell,
The banished Emperor came home again.
Homesick he died, longing, and not in vain,
That France would bear his ashes back to dwell
Among the people that he loved so well,
Upon the bank of his beloved Seine.
Around his dust the fadeless laurel twines,
A spell of victory woven guards his urn;
The azure light of endless summer shines
From dome to crypt, and altar candles burn
In the strange citadel, where—last retreat—
He sleeps, nor dreams of exile or defeat.

IN MEMORIAM

O POET! by no lordlier title known,
Rex Dei gratia of our realm of song,—
The woman who has wrought so well and long
To justify and dignify a throne,
Empress alike o'er many a heart and zone,
Moved by thy consolations sweet and strong,
Proud thy allegiance should to her belong,
Granted thee royal tribute of her own.
Thou who hast swept the lyre at Grief's behest,
Soothing the secret sorrows of thy race,
Thine arm has vanished in the mystic mere;
But thine the homage of the free, wide West,
And thine the tribute of the purest tear
A woman weeps who never saw thy face.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MURILLO

MADONNA, that the floating crescent bears
Above the clouds, where heaven's bright realms
begin,

Thy crown of mystic motherhood to win,
Thou know'st our love, our sorrows and our cares,
Thou of the seven wounds! and yet who dares
Claim thee as one to humankind akin?
Immaculate, what knowest thou of sin,
Of mortal passions and repentant prayers?
To a dead world thy stainless feet are pressed
That tells no tales to any living star;
Absorbed in silent raptures of the blest
Thou risest where the sinless seraphs are;
How whisper thee the secrets of my breast?
Ave purissima!—too pure, too far!

ANDRÉ IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

THIS tomb-walled temple proudly, sadly shows
How much it costs to make a nation great;
Each to its cause his best must dedicate,
And each must feel that what he gives he owes.
Here mourns Britannia o'er the sweet repose
Of one who gave beyond all estimate—
Whose piteous story these mute stones relate,
Who died lamented even by his foes.
He finds at last within this sacred nave
His recompense, however dearly bought,
Place with his peers, these of the laureled brow,
Who, might they die for England, recked not how,
Fame questions not the title of the brave;
Pro Patria—sword or halter matters naught.

A SECOND THOUGHT

[T is so long since thou wert lost to view,
Through the dim shadow-valley gone before,
That with grief's wonted pangs there throbs one more,
The dread that my lone heart, however true—
As years take all—may lose thy likeness, too,
The ungraven image it can still adore.
Vain dread! for calming time will but restore
Those visioned love-limned lineaments anew,—
As in a lake the mirrored moon may show
Inconstant, dimmed by every blurring breeze,
But pure and rounded when the ripples cease,—
In my soul's deep shall thy reflection grow
From wavering glimpses perfect by degrees,
As sorrow's surge subsides to waveless peace.

A PHOTOGRAPH

NO need to say, in gazing on this face,
"Oh, that those lips had language!"—for they
speak;

Mute revelations, too, in brow and cheek
And patient eyes, clear-sighted love can trace;
Life leaves in lines death only can efface
Records like those the chisel of the Greek
Bequeathed, wherein interpreters might seek
The tragedies and mysteries of his race.
What need of voice has marble Niobe?
Is not her woe unutterable told?
Needs that doomed group the serpents' coils infold
Words to express the struggle's agony?
All that thy pride and loyalty withhold
From friendship's ear, this picture tells to me.

ECHOES

ON winding hills that loom against the blue,
Pale mists, ethereal as incense float;
The first frail flowers the path of spring denote,
The weary world arouses to renew
Its annual task; absorbed, abstracted, too,
I hear from forest leafless and remote,
Like some sad strain learnt long ago by rote,
The dove's soft protestation: True, true, true!
The heavy heart grows lighter tear by tear,
Solaced by syllables so musical. . . .
O dove! thy tender melancholy coo
Goes to a heart that lonelier, year by year,
Echoes thy vow from wood-haunts cloisteral,
To love, to hope, to memory, true, true, true.

THE ROMEO AND JULIET OF BERLIOZ

SHAKESPEARE translated in love's native tongue
That best can make its loss and longing known!
While sweet strings trembled and sweet flutes were
blown,
In fancy she was Juliet fair and young,
Met her fate masked, in hostile arms had clung
Vanquished by love, in word and deed had shown
That love's worth all, and for its sake alone
Into the treacherous tomb her all had flung.
The music ceased,—her heart rose with a sigh,
Against the spinster's bodice close and high;
The tranced emotions buried in her breast,
Waked but too late, as Juliet did, to die.
Might life have been worth living? Still unguessed,
This riddle haunts her heart and breaks its rest.

BY THE SHACK

A KODAK

BUTTE beside Butte, along the sky they stand,
A line of sentinels to guard the vale;
The cottonwoods are fluttering in the gale,
Grouped by the river banks on either hand;
Adown the coulie through a verdant band
Trickles the rivulet the grasses veil;
Toward viewless distance turns the lonely trail—
A windy, sunny, melancholy land.
The wayward stream, enamored of the spot,
Winds idly down and wanders back again,
Loop along loop, almost a true-love knot,
Forgetful of the far-off patient main:
In yon blue bend by sparkling circles traced
The startled wild duck dips with headlong haste.

A DAKOTA SUNSET

ON every side one vast expanse of snow,
The shrouded earth lies deathly still and white,
But the live air thrills with the thaw's delight;
The river, past the willows' crimson glow,
Snow-muffled, ice-bound, glides unseen below.
Like pendulum along its arc of light,
A blazing ball above the glittering height,
Enmeshed with golden threads, the sun swings low.
Far toward the east where buttes pile close and high
On their white slopes the strangest shadows lie,
Blue as reflections from the firmament;
As though some wild west wind had rudely rent
The mystic curtain of the sacred sky,
Then, frightened, dropped the fragments as he went.

NIGHT ON THE OCKLAWAHA

BLINDED with light, along the gloomy stream
The deft boat gropes its solitary way
From bend to bend, flashing a sudden ray
On strange wild scenes that makes them stranger seem:
Fantastic vistas formed of dusk and gleam,
Trees like carved ivory, golden moss for gray,
Depths dim as Lethe, glimpses bright as day,
Like the unreal landscape of a dream.
The shrill steam-trumpetings, recurring, break
The jungle silence; from the beacon's height
The fiery torches scatter many a spark
That falls and quenches in the flickering wake;
And in the forest, lonely, scared to flight,
I hear the limpkin calling in the dark.

AN AUTUMN CAROL

THE golden leaves are rustling round my feet;
Alone, above, where crimson tree-tops high
Glitter against a flawless sapphire sky,
A bird that would not follow far and fleet
The summer's flight, sings in its calm retreat.
In its lost nest the leaves unheeded lie,
Untended now its once-loved fledgelings fly,
But hope and memory keep its song still sweet.
It knows that even these autumn glories wane,
That snow and storm the winter days must bring;
But it can bear them knowing that again
Wild-flowers will bloom and woods with love-notes ring,
And life's new gladness thrill from wing to wing:
Ah bird! if youth could but return like spring.

AN OCTOBER DAY

TO the far hills the veil of mist still clings
Though the high sun soars to a summer sky;
Frightened by last night's chill, there flutter by
Belated butterflies with yellow wings;
The daring spider's glistening slack-rope swings
From weed to bush; in golden bower nigh
A bird bound southward, lingering, loath to fly,
Snatches of his forgotten love-song sings.
The chirping things of summer's loss complain
In querulous chorus linked with long refrain,
Sad-hearted songsters that no sun beguiles
To blest forgetfulness of frost's keen pain;
While the doomed primrose still unconscious smiles,
And dazzled violets look for Spring again.

IN OCTOBER

O'ER the dim hills a blue film falls and flows
Down from the melting azure overhead:
The sailing, swooping hawk with wings outspread,
In golden light their silver lining shows:
With changeful splendors all the woodland glows;
The bursting pods their silken treasures shed;
And far resounds from yonder tree-top dead,
The clamorous convocation of the crows.
The brier branch boasts the crimson of the rose,
Spicewood with dogwood vies in berries red;
Where ripe nuts drop with every breeze that blows
The rustling leaves betray the squirrel's tread,
As warily with startled bounds he goes
To hoard his harvest by his wind-rocked bed.

NOVEMBER'S RUTH

O MOTHER earth! the autumn hours fly;
While yet 'tis warm I lean upon thy breast;
In failing grass with more than springtime zest,
Feel for the violets short-stemmed and shy;
The motley leaves lisp their last lullaby,
The sunshine seems the light of peace and rest
And over me extends from east to west
The solacing cerulean of the sky.
As some fond friend who says farewell and goes,
Seeing the loved one left begin to grieve,
Turns back to give one smile, one last caress,—
After the frosts and ere the fall of snows,
The parting season grants this brief reprieve,
Days whose strange sadness seems like happiness.

LAST THOUGHTS OF NATHAN HALE

MY country! if a doubt did ever rise,
Even when I ran to meet thy urgent call,
That I might hold thy ties and claims too small,
Or thy vast guerdon, freedom, fail to prize
As worth all pain, now Death to startled eyes—
Ere yet they close 'neath ignominy's pall—
Reveals thee mother, sovereign, all in all;
Like Peter to that doubt my heart replies,
Thou knowest I love thee, with my latest breath
I swear my fealty, prove it by the blot
Shame casts upon the record Honor won.
Die for thee, mother? ay, a felon's death,
I give my life grieving it is but one,
But, mother, when I die forget me not.

NIGHT'S MINISTRY

DAY'S heat and burden borne, on the lone height
Body and soul I bathed in waves of air,
Rippling and sparkling with the lustre fair
Of myriad stars; and down that Way of light,
Mosaic-paved with pearls and diamonds bright,
My glad eyes roved, rested from day's hot glare,
From following wearily the round of care—
Finding fresh pleasure in familiar night.
The heart, day withered like the grass new-mown,
Revived with happy tears as that with dew;
Joys, hid by day, like constellations shone;
Far as the farthest twinkle in the blue,
The mists of doubt by night's cool breath were blown;
Earth seemed a dream, and Heaven a dream come true.

MARGARET

FROM her pure pedestal a woman's face,
The mask of loveliness art fails to grave,
Bends o'er the orphan that she lived to save
From wretchedness and ruin and disgrace.
She, like her Master in the desert place
When people hungered, blessed the loaves and gave,
No other bliss than giving did she crave,—
And still they multiplied as by His grace.
She gave her all, seeing on every coin
Image and superscription of her King,
But here did happiness with duty join?
And in her heaven do they still closer cling?
Hush sordid questionings! our hearts believe
It is more blest to give than to receive.

THE LEADER'S CALL

WILD bird, whose melancholy warning cry
Pierces the stillness of the autumn eve!
Regret for shores too beautiful to leave,
Distrust of all below the course you fly,
Deep longing for the goal, not sure, not nigh,
Edge the sharp call that makes me halt and grieve
As though an arrow point my heart should cleave
Swift as the winged one hurtling through the sky.
We two—a summer lake—and flocks that flew
Or plunged before the flight of our canoe,
Vanishing suddenly in either blue—
Moments as fleet, as evanescent, too!
All gone, the joy no summer can restore,
The far lone cry recalls it all once more.

MAIDEN AND MOON

ONCE in a dream I saw the full moon fall
Like a dead leaf adown the dusky air,
Blown to the outer darkness elsewhere;
And stormy nights like this the dream recall,
When from the black clouds' silver-broidered pall
The white disk gleams, so still, so chill, so fair.
Dead! in her youth, perhaps, but wandering there,
A ghost that nightly haunts our living ball.
Pale sister moon, what broke thy virgin heart
And left thee wrecked and desolate in space?—
Love of some central sun too far above,
Too ardent, else? Silent and cold thou art,
Shrouded in mystery; but thy pure face
Is radiant with the lingering light of love.

A TRICK OF DREAMS

I COUNTED all sad things, as if I told
The beads of memory's chaplet o'er and o'er,
Each year some loss or failure to deplore,
Some hope or joy gone as the tarnished gold
Falls from the boughs whose buds in Spring unfold
To bee-loved blooms; but there is one thing more
Sadder than all delusions heretofore,—
To dream of being young and waken old.
No foolish tears to ease the foolish pain,
The mocked heart in the lonely darkness hides
Its pang unspeakable by mortal tongue;
No remedy but not to dream again,—
Or, better, when some happier night betides,
Fall asleep old, and, haply, waken young.

A NAMESAKE ROSE

O'ER the unfolding beauties of his rose
Softly we say, "The actions of the just
Smell sweet in death, and blossom in the dust";
And thinking of him gone to his repose,
Each one of us who dearly loved him knows
This meet memorial more worthy trust
Than "storied urn or animated bust,"
For rooted in his native land it grows.
This sturdy stock reminds us of his strength,
These lavish leaves his benefits might be,
This crimson heart recalls his, warm and true,
Withered and fallen to the earth at length;
The fragrance is his precious memory,
And on these petals tears shall fall for dew.

AN APRIL FANCY

HOW strange a thing is love, the slave of fate!—
Slights beauty sometimes, blind to faults appears,
And even from smiles and dimples flies to tears.
The sad Earth is the bright Sun's chosen mate;
He loves her with a warmth exceeding great;
He draws her to him from the lonely spheres
And comforts her for all the barren years
In cold and chaos spent disconsolate.
And though they daily seem to part, we know
They do but play a game of hide and seek;
And when she looks so dark against the glow
She's only turning him her other cheek;
And when she weeps that clouds obscure him—lo!
He smiles her tears to jewels as they flow.

SUNRISE

MORN, let thy oriflamme be quick unfurled;
Blush, happy sky, as conscious of thy charms;
Flit, ghostly mist-clouds, waving phantom arms
That late around the sleeping hills were curled;
Ring welcome, birds, in bushes dew-impearled,
And rouse the sluggards with thy gay alarms.
The landlord Sun, comes up to see his farms,
His favorite fields, this fair and fruitful world.
Let him not see his tenants idle stand;
Seed-time and harvest fail not, nor should fail
The patient will, the strong and skillful hand
Whose help may make the Sun's warm heart avail
To flush with roses cheeks now pinched and pale,
And fill with plenty all the peaceful land.

MAMMOTH CAVE

SILENT, reverberant, like some vast shell
Its unknown occupant at last outgrows,
Lies the dark labyrinth. No longer flows
The rushing river whose obstructed swell
Clove these wild ways, and dashed along pell-mell
These rugged rocks, and in its mighty throes
Burst these wide caverns, and in domes arose—
Then, desperate, down these black abysses fell.
All vanished,—save the still, small secret stream
Amid whose gloom the prisoned echoes fly—
And in its empty course we glide to-day,
Glancing like fireflies with the lanterns' gleam,
Strange visitants, to vanish by and by,
As the lost, nameless river passed away.

A FESTIVAL FANCY

TO the May blue the crimson walls uplift
 Their starlit pinnacles, the soft spring air
Seems waves of harmony, and unaware
To dreamlands blest our solaced spirits drift.
The resonant hall in changes sweet and swift
Rings now of love and youth, of praise and prayer,
Of life and death, and with some chorus rare
Chimes the remembrance of a noble gift.
And thou, cold warder by the gates of song
With marble mask inscrutable and strong,
Silent amid the joyous eager throng,
Hadst thou not, too, when thou wert live and warm
Like Saul, like me, some thought that wrought thee
 harm,
Some ghostly grief music alone could charm?

INNUENDOS

SHRILL katydid, you prate of many a night
In memory's reliquary laid away,
Of twilight hours worth all the summer day,
Of witcheries hinted in the dim starlight
And bold enchantment when the moon shone bright—
When men were gallant, girls were coy, but gay,
When Love was Lord, and Beauty's gentle sway
Made even this wrong old world seem dear and right.
Fainthearted tattler that a second thought
To countless incoherencies has brought,
Green-coated spy by friendly foliage hid,
Finish your sentence as you know you ought:
If Katy dared what chaperons forbid
Out with it, gossip—tell us what she did!

SIC TRANSIT

ONE summer gone, there swept across the sky
The rare, strange splendor of a comet's trail,
Like some vast plume that on a wandering gale
Had blown from vaster world beyond descry.
Night after night we saw it float and fly,
And where it flung its soft and radiant veil
Our best-loved stars seemed cold and dim and pale;
But one sad night it vanished suddenly.
Those summer nights across my heart there passed
The trailing splendor of Love's glowing wings,
And all my best-loved joys beside this last
Faded and paled to dull and common things—
Then, fast as comet round its orbit swings
Love flew, and left my lonely heart aghast.

FRIENDSHIP RENEWED

DEAR friend, both old and new, when Fate her spell
Cast o'er our love in childhood's happy hour,
Entranced, like Sleeping Beauty in the bower
It lay till Time annulled her witchery fell.
Now waking, young as then, its dazed eyes dwell
On faces wan, that only Memory's power
Can brighten with the looks that were their dower
In the far past that she recalls so well.
What treasure-trove this friendship old and rare!
Our love may be like that strange Eastern flower
That life suspending holds its fragrant breath
Till, frailer blossoms strewed and garden bare,
With tender care revived from feignéd death,
It sheds its sweetness on the wintry air.

DESTINY

FROM topmost stem that stretches toward the skies,
In the bright stillness of a frosty morn,
One of a thousand, falls a ripe acorn.
Buried in leaves, like the lost babes, it lies,
The squirrel hoards it not with his supplies,
The wild bird misses it, the nut-worms scorn;
Only earth cherishes her waif forlorn
And warms it with a love that never dies.
So with the centuries it grows a tree
Gigantic, grander than the parent oak:
Then chance and force transform it, and at sea
The land-nursed changeling finds its destiny
Bearing thro' reddened waves and battle smoke
Earth's chosen hero to his victory.

THE SONNET

LIKE a cut jewel in its form exact,
Molded by happy art, that knows no wrong,
And though so fragile-seeming, strangely strong,
The cell within the honeycomb compact
Can hold the subtile essences intact
Of once loved lilies, faded now so long,
And clover blossoms a bewildering throng,
And to its measure summer's sweets contract.
So in the sonnet-cell the poets build,
Little but fashioned for containing much,
They oftentimes their choicest nectar store,
With memory's delicate aroma filled,
And in the cup no careless hand may touch
The hoarded sweetness of a lifetime pour.

AN EVENING IN SPRING

HOW sweet the day has been—too sweet to last!
The winter hours that chilled and dormant lie
Seem like chrysalides of these that fly
Bright-hued and light-winged, flitting by so fast.
As now with then we joyfully contrast
The blooming world, the ever deepening sky,
Fulfill his vision whose prophetic eye
Saw a new heaven, new earth, the first were passed.
The sun delights to lavish all his powers
And wins from transient gloom these glories new,
His parting glance transmutes to sparkling showers
The floating cloud that erst was morning dew,
And all their mingled memories of flowers
Flash in the rainbow's wraith-wreath on the blue.

CO-OPERATION

EARTH'S toilers striving with the land they till
To wrest their bread from its reluctant hold,
Bending with sweat-crowned brows above the mould,
Unconsciously a higher end fulfill;
With artist touch they paint the plain and hill
In varying shades of brown and green and gold,
And all the lovely landscape wide unrolled,
Use and its flower beauty blended fill.
How soon the wind-waved grain and fluttering corn
The tired plowman's lagging footprints hide!
For Nature, with her lowliest child allied,
Makes his necessity her world adorn,
And ever toils unwearied by his side
That sense and soul may both be satisfied.

ORIGINAL LOVE

SHE stood appalled, the apple in her palm;
Its luscious juice through all her trembling frame
Darting its knowledge like a tongue of flame,—
Lost Paradise, lost innocence, lost calm!
In all these losses finding love's new charm,
She said, rose red, as clad with dawn of shame,
"Taste, for alone I cannot bear the blame;
O love! I never meant to do thee harm."
Then pausing speechless, breathless till he chose,
Adown her cheeks strange sudden tear-drops crept;
Tears filled his eyes, and dim before them swept
The ghastly long procession of their woes,—
Death last—he took her pleading hand and mute,
He set his teeth in the accurséd fruit.

COLUMBUS

I CANNOT sleep: all day across the brine
Strange scents and wafts, strange birds with sea-
ward flight
Proved true the dreams that like these waves to-night
With flashes of uncertain splendors shine.
Spirit of God! that with a power divine
Moved upon waters ere Thy word was light,
To form Thy world—Thou only know'st aright
The fear-fraught rapture of this hope of mine.
I feel the restless vessel rise and dip
In unknown seas—so does my heart expand,
Then shrink with dread of slip 'twixt cup and lip.
A queen's faith strengthens mine; her loyal ship
Shall bear me safely to the long-sought strand;
The cross shall consecrate her promised land.

THE LOST LEADER

AND he is gone, our joy of many years—
No more we see him stand alert, intent,
Drawing the soul from every instrument
With fairy wand—charming our eager ears
With harmony gay, exultant, sad as tears—
Guiding the various voices rainbow-blent
In lovers' raptures, hopeless love's lament,
Or adoration's flight beyond the spheres.
He led his listeners to pure heights of Art,
The last notes that he heard sang, Victory!
He sowed the mustard seed that grew a tree
Where the birds lodge, and many a mourning heart,
Warmed when his fire fused music with delight,
Sighs to his silent sleep a sweet goodnight.

NARCISSUS

WHEN from the still sweet slumbers of the tomb
The wind of spring wakes me and my regret,
The slighted nymphs pursue me even yet
With haunting eyes and phantom cheeks a-bloom.
Waste be the groves that hid my heartless gloom,—
May the streams dry where I my image met!
Sad tryst, sad lot mine, never to forget
The fateful beauty that presaged my doom.
How hateful seems the self I used to love!
Hateful this pallid flower to which I pined,
Whose cerement-petals that dead self inclose:
But I accept the will of gods above,
And in recurring death some comfort find,
For now I die of longing for the rose.

VICTOR

ROME from the vantage of her seven hills
Looks on my triumph, hard-won, brief, and dear;
Along the legions' line from van to rear
Victorious eagles gleam, and through me thrills
The voice of multitudinous good wills.
Cup and lip meet, the draught is full of cheer:
Abject and subject to my charioteer,
Fettered, afoot, my foe his doom fulfills.
His doom—that word like lightning-flash betrays
The secret the dark oracle contained,
Sought for so long, and found at last too late.
Droop, head, that has but half a right to bays,
Trophies and honors pall, the cup is drained . . .
I conqueror? Not I alone, but Fate.

VANQUISHED

ACCURSÉD be my trusty, traitorous shield
That kept the Roman spear-points from my heart,
And left me here to bear a craven's part
In my foe's triumph,—I who used to wield
Victorious arms on many a battlefield,
Where the rebellious hordes were made to smart—
Now, like a slave dragged to the common mart,
Caught like a wild beast, for I did not yield.
O anguished heart! that could not bleed at need,
Break now, and set the wretched captive free!
Bare head, bend not beneath the conqueror's scorn!
All that he arrogates as victor's meed,
In the last flare of dying light, I see
Was written in the stars, ere we were born.





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